

WALSALL CHRONICLE

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What's on

Chance to check festive viewing

Starts Page 25



Baby's big day

Family's delight as it all figures out for Anneliese

Page 3



Saddlers' joy

Shrews are silenced by victorious Walsall

Page 40



Witness call over robbers at Co-op

POLICE are appealing for witnesses after armed robbers wielding crowbars targeted a Co-op store in Willenhall.

The thugs hit a female shop worker before fleeing with alcohol and cigarettes in the robbery at the branch in Coppice Farm, Willenhall – the latest in a string of terrifying raids at convenience stores. Police were called to the shop in Essington Road at around 4.15pm on Sunday – around 15 minutes after it closed.

Deb Edmonds, spokeswoman for West Midlands Police, said a worker had been hit during the robbery. "Four men armed with crowbars went into the shop and stole a quantity of alcohol and cigarettes," she said.

"A female member of staff was hit to the head but did not suffer serious injuries."

Police carried out door-to-door inquiries in the area and have launched an appeal for anyone with information to come forward.

Helen Seed, spokeswoman for The Co-operative Food, said: "CCTV footage has been given to the police, who are investigating. We would appeal for anyone with information to come forward."

The robbery comes just 10 days after two other Co-op stores were targeted by thieves.

Right note for singers

ORGANISERS of an outdoor carol service set to take place this weekend are hoping that it hits the right note with families in Walsall.

The Carols in the Garden celebration will be held on Saturday from 5pm in a community garden off Carless Street in Caldmore. It has been organised by the Caldmore Village Festival Group. Families are being advised to bring torches or festive lanterns. Anna Rogozinska, community organiser, said: "This is a great way of bringing the community together."

CHIEFS' PLEDGE ON TROUBLED SCHOOL

CHIEFS at a Walsall academy, set up less than two years ago, have admitted that the school needs to significantly improve after inspectors recommended that it is put into special measures.

Ofsted said Mirus Academy was 'inadequate' overall with the lowest ratings given in all four key areas – achievement of children; teaching standards; behaviour and safety; and leadership.

Academy operator Walsall College has since confirmed an interim head, Mr Dan Neal, had been brought in to oversee improvements.

The school has been campaigning for Government funds to carry out £500,000 worth of repairs to its crumbling buildings.

More than 1,200 pupils aged three to 19 attend the academy across two sites.

These were previously known as Frank F Harrison School, in Leamore Lane, and Hatherton Primary, in Bloxwich Lane, Beechdale.

The Ofsted report said the academy that was created in January 2012 'requires special measures'.

Weaknesses

It stated there is low attainment in maths and English; low pupil attendance with pupil absence higher than the national average particularly in Years 10 and 11; bosses did not use effective strategies to tackle poor behaviour; and that the sixth form was inadequate.

It added that despite younger pupils making progress in Year 6 and there being good support for trainee teachers, the leaders including the governors had not taken quick enough action to tackle 'significant weaknesses' in achievement.

In a statement Walsall College said the school needs

by Deborah Hardiman

to significantly improve to meet its long-term ambitions.

It said the governors were taking strong and decisive actions to address the issues and Mr Neal was brought in to turn around the academy's fortunes. It said the governors were confident this would bring immediate improvements.

And the statement added the academy was working to improve standards in all areas 'whilst learning from mistakes made in the past'.

Interim head Mr Neal said: "I have worked in seven schools with over 12 years' experience in a leadership role."

"We have some very clear aims to improve standards here at The Mirus Academy and I am confident that pupils and parents alike will soon see the progress which is already being made."

Walsall North MP David Winnick, who two months ago led a delegation from Mirus to ask Schools Minister David Laws for money to revamp buildings, said: "It is totally unfair on the pupils and staff that the school should remain in its present situation without any building work being undertaken."

Festive spectacle makes big splash



The spectacular water, light and sound show which celebrated Christmas and the Waterfront project's completion

AN EVENTFUL year for Walsall town centre was brought to a fitting, colourful climax as a water, light and sound show was staged as part of its Christmas celebrations.

The stunning display also marked the completion earlier this year of the £65 million Waterfront South regeneration project.

The Magical Waters show, staged dozens of times over the course of the weekend, illuminated the Walsall canal basin, where 322 homes and business units have been created.

The spectacular, sponsored and organised by Cannock-based developer Jessup, was the highlight of a programme of festive attractions that also included an ice rink and a Santa's grotto.

The water show was switched on by nine-year-old Nina Brook-Lloyd, the winner of a competition to make an origami paper boat.

Youngsters worked on their entries in the school half-term at the New Art Gallery, which organised the skills contest with Walsall Council. Children

aged up to 16 were invited to take part and more than 120 entries were received.

Chief executive Clive Jessup was on hand to present prizes to Nina and two runners-up. He said: "This five-and-a-half acres of land has now been fully developed and this was a fitting way to mark its completion."

The 48-year-old boss said he remembered being taken as a boy to see the Walsall illuminations at the Arboretum and wanted to recapture something of the event's magic.

Survival fears for clubs with fees hike

SPORTS clubs in Walsall today said they may struggle to survive if council plans to raise the cost of annual fees are pushed through.

Walsall Council has announced that annual fees for bowls clubs could rise from £810 to £6,605 and charges paid by children's football teams will be more than quadrupled, while cric-ket clubs will have to shell out double the current amount.

Costs for junior football teams will go up from £382 to £1,618 and cricket teams who pay £1,059 will be hit with a £2,893 annual charge.

Peggy Williams, a 71-year-old member of the Brownhills and Oak Park bowling club said: "We have 37 members and most of them are over 70. We are being urged to do exercise and keep fit but how are we supposed to pay these fees?"

Councillor Anthony Harris, leisure and culture boss, said: "For a number of years the council has heavily subsidised the cost of providing and maintaining outdoor grass sports facilities."

"For example, in the case of providing bowling greens for six sessions per season, the existing charge is £810 yet the ground maintenance costs are in excess of £6,000."

People can still have their say by emailing budgetcon-consultation@walsall.gov.uk

New trees are targeted

A DOZEN trees which were newly planted to mark the 800th anniversary of Walsall's oldest church have been vandalised.

A number of diseased trees overshadowing St Matthew's Church in the town centre had been removed, with replacement trees recently planted.

Council bosses said the cost of the damage is believed to be £300. Councillor Mohammed Arif, Walsall Council's portfolio holder for environment, said it was 'mindless vandalism'.

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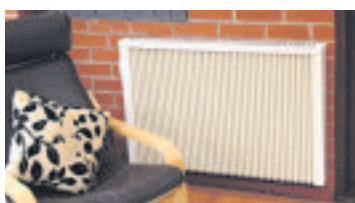
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Apprentices on project pass 500 mark

THE number of apprentices passing through a council project has passed the 500 mark.

Marcus Tonks, aged 21 from Brownhills and Chris Winter, 22 from Pelsall have been helped by Walsall Council to begin an apprenticeship in engineering and manufacturing with training provider, In-Comm. Over the next few months, they will be instructed in a

variety of fabrication and welding techniques at In-Comms' training centre in Aldridge, before transferring across to Walsall manufacturing firm European Heathyards in March next year.

"When I left school I had numerous jobs," said Mr Tonks, a former pupil at Brownhills Common school. "I've worked in sales, as a labourer on a building site and worked long hours as a press operator. In

between jobs I've been unemployed and was on Job Seekers' Allowance when I applied for the apprenticeship.

Former Shelfield Academy pupil Mr Winter said: "I'd left school and began labouring on a building site and then did a carpentry course at a local college and became self-employed."

"But work just dried up and I had to sign on for a couple of months. I

then saw an opportunity to enrol as an engineering apprentice with In-Comm."

"I applied for the vacancy and it's a decision I don't regret as I'm enjoying what I'm doing."

Councillor Adrian Andrew, portfolio holder for regeneration at Walsall Council, said: "It's one of our top priorities to help businesses create jobs and opportunities for young people in Walsall."

Parents' heartbreak as son dies of meningitis

THE devastated parents of Mason Timmins, who died after contracting meningitis, have said they are determined to keep his memory alive as they paid tribute to their 'fantastic lad'.

The shock death of the seven-year-old Little Bloxwich Primary School pupil sparked a health investigation and support was being offered to pupils, parents and staff at the school in the wake of the tragedy.

Mason received treatment at Walsall Manor Hospital and the University Hospital of North Staffordshire in Stoke before he died on December 9.

His family were with him when he died. His father Mark said: "I held him until I felt his heart stop beating and we are all grateful we were able to be with him and say goodbye."

"Staff at the Manor and Stoke were wonderful and did all they could but he had such a rare type of meningitis that he couldn't survive. But we want to keep talking about him and let everyone know how much he meant to us all. He was motorbike-mad and motocross-mad and had a KTM bike."

Favourite

"He loved playing on his Xbox and was really set in his ways. He wore exactly what he wanted to wear and didn't care what anyone thought. His favourite colours were orange and pink. We're all mad about motorbikes in the family - his grandad has a Harley Davidson - and we think as he got older he might have been a mechanic. He was always tinkering away with a spanner in his hand when he got the chance."

Mason also leaves three-year-old sister Billie Rose, stepsister Becci, 21, and stepbrother Chris, 23.

Mother, Mrs Timmins, who works as a teaching assistant at Old Church CofE Primary School, Darlaston, said Mason's family felt the most fitting legacy

by Craig Hughes

he could leave behind would be to encourage others to live life to the full. "We want his friends to keep going to school, taking part in all the activities they can and just get the most out of things," she said. "We feel like we're on the outside looking in at someone else going through this - it hasn't sunk in yet and shouldn't have happened to a child. But we have to keep going for our other children."

She said she did not want other parents to panic about meningitis. "Please read our story and be aware of the symptoms and get medical help if you feel your child is really unwell. But what happened to Mason is rare and people shouldn't forget that," she said.

News of Mason's untimely death was broken to councillors during a cabinet meeting. A statement released by Walsall Council states: "Members of Walsall Council's cabinet have sent their deepest sympathies to the family and friends of a seven-year-old who has passed away after contracting meningococcal disease."

"The council and Public Health England are liaising closely with parents and the school community - who are understandably shocked and anxious at this difficult time - to reassure them that while this is an extremely tragic case it is very rare."

Bloxwich East Councillor Kath Phillips said: "This, happening at Christmas time makes it even worse."



Mason Timmins, who died from meningitis aged seven, with his sister Billie Rose

Thief caught with £6k of metal

A THIEF was caught in the act of stealing around £6,000 worth of aluminium products from a firm in Brownhills, a court heard.

Christopher Jones bundled the metal into the back of a van after he managed to get into a secure yard at Access Products Ltd, Walsall Magistrates Court heard yesterday.

But the 29-year-old was caught by an employee of the West Coppice Road firm, which manufactures and sells a range of access and security products such as ladders and scaffold towers. Mrs Jenny Winzor, prosecuting, said the worker turned up for his night shift at around 10pm on November

24 and heard noises coming from the rear yard. The court was told that Jones was questioned by police and asked what he was doing there. Mrs Winzor said he had told officers his name was John and initially said he worked for the firm. He then tried to flee but was arrested less than 20ft away.

The value of the metal involved was around £6,000. All of it was recovered. Jones, of Harrison Road, Pelsall, pleaded guilty to theft. Magistrates adjourned the case for a pre-sentence report to be prepared. Jones is due to be sentenced at Walsall Magistrates Court on January 3.

Boost for meals on wheels in borough

MEALS on wheels is expanding, with one council launching its service outside the city limits.

Anyone living within a four-mile radius of Wolverhampton can now order hot or frozen meals direct to their door. The city council has confirmed that as long as there is enough interest from a specific location to make it viable, they will deliver there.

In June 2012 the council changed its eligibility criteria for meals on wheels and opened it up to all, irrespective of financial background.

The new initiative will open the service up to those living in nearby areas such as Sedgley, Coseley, Willenhall, Darlaston and South Staffordshire villages including Codsall will be able to benefit.

A daily delivered hot meal plus a dessert will cost £4.35 for those living outside of the city. Frozen meals, which are cheaper and delivered fortnightly, are also available.

Councillor John Reynolds, a cabinet member for city services, said: "The council's meals on wheels service is a genuine success story. Since June 2012 we've delivered more than 103,500 meals."

To find out more call 01902 556677 or visit www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/mealsonwheels

Residents in bin services day change

BIN collection days in parts of Walsall have been changed as part of moves to make the service more efficient.

Householders in Pelsall, Brownhills, Rushall, Shelfield and parts of Aldridge are now getting their rubbish picked up on Fridays.

Darlaston, Bentley, parts of Willenhall and Short Heath have swapped to Mondays from this week. Residents in these two areas will be allowed to put out up to one additional bag of normal household waste.

There will be no changes to collection days in the other areas. Letters are also being sent to those who will have a day change. The council has distributed calendars to all households over Christmas collections. More details are on 01922 653344 or cleanand-green@walsall.gov.uk

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Ex-club building plans for 10 flats

A ONCE popular working men's club is poised to permanently close and be converted into flats after suffering from dwindling numbers.

The Station Street club in Walsall has room for more than 350 customers but has seen a slump in the numbers over the past 12 months.

It has most recently been operating as a pub but since last year customers have reduced from an average of 150 to just 25 a week.

The building has been earmarked for conversion into 10 flats and members of the planning committee have been recommended to approve the plans when they hold their meeting today, Thursday.

At the peak of its popularity, the club at the junction of Milton Street and Cobden Street, Palfrey, was used for parties, weddings and social functions having a licensed concert room.

Two letters of objection have been submitted with concerns over parking.

Palfrey councillor Mohammad Nazir, also Mayor of Walsall, said: "I wouldn't like to see an empty building there. If the club is not financially viable I would like to see it converted into apartments as we have a shortage of residential accommodation in the area."

Panel rules ward doctor was 'naive'

A JUNIOR doctor who performed an 'unauthorised' examination on an elderly patient at a hospital he didn't work at to prepare for his exams has been let off after a panel ruled it was a 'naive misjudgement'.

Dr Asam Murtaza, who was employed at Walsall Manor Hospital, followed unwitting staff through a security door at Birmingham City Hospital to gain access to the ward on February 25 last year.

But before he was caught he had time to identify himself as a student doctor to an elderly lady and conduct an examination where he touched her face, hands, arms and legs, the Medical Practitioners Tribunal Service heard. He admitted a string of charges against him at a fitness to practise hearing in Manchester, but the panel found his behaviour was not misconduct.

£200k pot may help replace outdated lights

OUTDATED traffic lights could be replaced under new £200,000 a year plans to upgrade signals and reduce costs for cash-strapped Walsall Council.

Bosses at the local authority are looking to replace around 30 lights over a five year period and say the new equipment would help save electricity and maintenance costs.

Transport chief, councillor Adrian Andrew, said: "As in many areas technology is constantly evolving and manufacturers can only support older equipment for a

certain timescale before it becomes obsolete. An ongoing replacement programme is needed to ensure all the equipment across the borough is up to date, effective and efficient both in terms of operation and the amount of energy it uses.

Duties

"It is one of the council's statutory duties to maintain all its traffic signals and crossings to ensure safe and efficient movements for motorists and pedestrians."

The launch of the programme is dependent on the authority securing funds as it is

currently only on the draft capital reserve programme.

A report to the council over the issue states: "Signals will be improved all across the borough at traffic signal locations where the control equipment is now obsolete."

"The scheme will facilitate the replacement of obsolete traffic control equipment at six pedestrian crossings per year, replacing 30 of the current 74 obsolete pedestrian crossings over the five year period."

"An ongoing investment programme of £200,000 per year is required to clear the backlog and address future obsolescence's

through a planned asset management programme."

Bosses in the borough have already started replacing street lights in a bid to save cash.

New LED street lights have already been introduced in Bloxwich and Leamore under a £250,000 scheme being rolled out by the council.

Officials at the local authority are looking at expanding the 'light to save' initiative into Brownhills.

The approach is said to use less electricity and give out better light.

Seven are handed jail terms after violence at EDL rally

IT WAS supposed to be a peaceful demonstration, but when the EDL held a rally in Walsall town centre fireworks and planks of wood were thrown, injuring police officers and protesters.

A string of jobs involved in the violence have been hauled before the courts and another seven men are now behind bars for their part in the trouble on September 29 last year.

Mark Baker, of Pleck; Stephen Bennett, of Palfrey; Kirk Reeves, of Swadincote; Leslie Silk, of Bristol; Peter Kirkham, of Dudley; Craig Forward, of Tipton, and Myles Smith, of Leeds, were all jailed on Monday.

Forward, of Neptune Street, Tipton, was handed the longest prison sentence and was locked up for 25 months. Mr Bennett said 38-year-old Forward had thrown a three-foot-long piece of wood towards police.

In mitigation, Mr Ben Nicholls said his client did not have a racist attitude.

Covered

Speaking about Smith's part in the disorder, Mr Bennett said that he targeted two police dogs. The court heard that Smith, aged 39, of Parkway Towers, Leeds, also had his face covered by a scarf at times. He was jailed for two years.

Representing him, Ms Lindsey Lobley said he accepted the incident was 'stupid' and 'senseless'. Mr Bennett told the court 44-year-old Baker, of Horseshoe Close, Pleck, was described by police as being 'extremely worked up and angry'.

Defending Baker, Mr Stephen Cadwaladr said his client did not use physical violence and did not chant 'hate language'. Baker was jailed for 21 months.

Stephen Bennett, 23, of Milton Street, Palfrey, was described by police as 'standing on a bench throwing at least four objects into the police line'.

Defending Bennett, Mr Christopher O'Gorman said his client had no previous convictions. He is now in employment and engaged to be married.

by Kirsten Rawlins

Bennett was sentenced to 20 months.

Prosecutor Mr Bennett said Reeves, aged 40, of Colliery Road, Swadincote became involved 'when he received a lump to the back of his head'. As a result, Reeves then 'punched and kicked against the police shields'. He is currently serving an 18-month jail term for burglary.

Defending Reeves, Mr David Munro said his client said he had been struck with a police baton. He was jailed for 18 months to be completed after his current sentence.

Silk, meanwhile, of Gatcombe Road, Bristol, was seen chanting as others had to be pushed back by police, the court heard.

The 37-year-old claimed he was trying to protect a child that had fallen over. He was jailed for 15 months.

Kirkham, aged 30, of New Rowley Road, Dudley, had 'lunged' at an officer and grabbed his truncheon, Mr Bennett said. In mitigation, Mr Jas Mann said he did not hold racist views and had attended the march because his mother was going, but was now remorseful.

Sentencing him to 14 months, Judge Webb said there was no evidence he had thrown anything or used force.

The seven men had all previously pleaded guilty to violent disorder.

Gareth Ballan, 28, of Silverdale Place, Newton Aycliffe, also appeared to be sentenced for the same charge. His case was adjourned to January 13 at Birmingham Crown Court.



Parents Jack Lambert and Cindy Richards, of California Road, Tividale, with Anneliese Clare Lambert - born weighing 8 lbs at 9:10 pm on 11-12-2013

Newborn Anneliese has magic numbers

ANNELIESE Clare Lambert definitely has a way with numbers.

When the baby girl made her arrival into the world it was perfectly timed. She was born weighing just over 8lbs, at 9.10pm on December 11, 2013, so she has the numbers 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 in numerical order associated with her birth.

Although they were aware of the significance of the date, proud parents Cindy Richards and Jack Lambert did not realise what had happened at first until a midwife pointed out her time of arrival and sequence of the numbers.

Anneliese who was born at Russells Hall Hospital in Dudley, has a five-year-old brother Tyler and a four-year-old sister Tiffanie, who are delighted to have a younger sister.

Their proud grandmother Barbara King, of Walsall, said she was shocked when she found out the number sequence: "It was amazing when we realised, I couldn't believe it."

"What are the chances of that happening? I'm going to use the numbers as lottery numbers because they must be lucky. Anneliese is lovely, she's a little bruiser," she said.

NEWS in brief

Pupils get expert tips on fire safety

SCHOOL pupils have been taught the importance of fire safety ahead of Christmas. Youngsters at Charles Caddy Walker Academy in Walsall were visited by firefighters who held a demonstration about fire risks in the home.

Pupils from years four and five were shown a DVD which dramatised a fire in a bedroom. The children were then invited to discuss available escape routes. This was followed by a short quiz.

"The West Midlands Fire Service do a fantastic job," said headteacher Mark Smith. "We wanted them to share their knowledge with the pupils here."

Manor is lowest in maternity poll

WALSALL Manor Hospital has come out bottom locally in a survey asking mothers about their experience of maternity care.

Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust scored 109.8 out of a possible 200. Women were asked questions covering 20 topics, including communication with patients and partners, and compassion shown by staff.

Walsall, according to data taken from 114 women, was recorded as doing 'better' in the overall topic of 'labour and staff' and appropriate advice and support being given at the start of labour.

Yodel jobs move is given backing

THE RECRUITMENT of more than 300 temporary workers at Yodel, the parcel delivery firm this Christmas has been backed by a ward councillor.

An additional 120 lorry drivers and 200 sorters at have been brought in at its sorting centre on the border of Willenhall and Darlaston.

Darlaston South councillor Doug James said: "I am delighted with the success of Yodel, it is a very important local employer in the Darlaston area."

Rescue animals get festive boost

HUNGRY cats and dogs in rescue centres will enjoy a tasty meal this Christmas thanks to a veterinary clinic.

Staff and customers at 387 Veterinary Centre in Walsall Road, Great Wyrley are collecting donations of food and bags of biscuits this month. The food will be handed over to the Cannock branch of Cats Protection and Sunnyside Kennels in Coven.

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NEWS

THE BEST
OF PETER
RHODES

SCIENTISTS in China are reported to be developing technology that can make objects seemingly disappear. I can't see that working, can you?

FROM this week's report on plump schoolchildren, we learn that a trustee of the National Obesity Forum is a Mr Fry.

THE official version of the Mandela story, parroted unquestioningly by the Western media, is that he was adored by all his people and that he created a free and equal South Africa committed to democracy. So why were there tens of thousands of empty seats at the FNB football stadium on Tuesday? And why did the crowd stand and cheer that bloody-handed old land-grabber and voter-rigger, Robert Mugabe? You might easily form the opinion that now the national father-figure with his message of forgiveness and reconciliation has passed on, some South Africans are itching to try Comrade Mugabe's policy of simply grabbing the white man's riches.

I THOUGHT at the time that the chap doing the deaf sign language at the Mandela memorial ceremony looked a bit worried. Now we learn that Thamsanqa Jantjie's "signing" was gibberish. It makes me wonder how much of the signing we see on British telly is 100 per cent accurate. They do seem to cram an awful lot of words into one or two hand gestures. You know the sort of thing. The newsreader says: "Prime Minister David Cameron and Foreign Secretary William Hague today returned from a five day conference on science and technology in Uzbekistan" and in the corner of your screen, the signer puts up three fingers, touches his nose and tweaks his ear. So which bit of that was "Uzbekistan"?

IF I enter a mosque I remove my shoes. If I go into a synagogue I cover my head with a kippa. When you enter the premises of another faith or culture, it is common courtesy to respect their ways. And when extremist religious speakers enter British universities they should accept the customs of their hosts. But Universities UK seriously suggests that audiences might be segregated, with men and women sitting apart, if a fundamentalist speaker requested it. UUK which bills itself as "the definitive voice for universities in the UK," should be ashamed of itself. Apartheid was demolished in South Africa and segregation was defeated in the States. The idea of reintroducing something similar in British universities to placate some sexually-confused throwbacks who'd be happier living in the 7th century is revolting.

SO HOW do you deal with an organisation which attempts to sexually segregate an audience on religious grounds? I'm with the emailer who suggests men should whisper earnestly to the stewards: "My religion says I must sit with females."

CHRISTMAS is usually a great time for animal charities to produce photos of their most adorable creatures and rattle the collecting tin. But how on earth can any dog, cat or donkey sanctuary compete against 100 baby seals washed up in last week's tidal surge and now being cared for at the RSPCA's East Winch Wildlife Centre? These pups are the ookey-snookummy sweetest little things you have ever seen, a heart-tugging cross between Bambi and the Little Mermaid, all wide-eyed, shiny-nosed, mewling for bottled milk and trying to suckle the TV camera lens. That's where the Xmas charity cheques will go. Signed, sealed and delivered.

ONE woman plucked pure, heavenly magic from a Celtic harp. Another seemed to be trying to extract a tune from an oven-ready turkey, which turned out to be a primitive bagpipe. I am just back from a thoroughly uplifting evening of medieval music with Jogleares, a five-piece band performing the sort of music our families enjoyed 20 generations ago. It was the perfect start to yuletide.

Don't miss Peter Rhodes every Monday to Friday in your Express & Star

Dust row firm reveals relocation plans



The current site of AB Waste in Darlaston

A WASTE firm that became the centre of a dust row and came under fire for illegally using two sites intends to relocate to another part of the Black Country. AB Waste in Darlaston, which was criticised by mourners complaining that dust from the site was settling on headstones at James Bridge Cemetery, is planning to move to Bloxwich.

Two Walsall Council enforcement

ment notices were served on the firm after operations on two sites increased without planning permission. They required the firm to leave within a specified time and the enforcement was upheld by the Planning Inspectorate on appeal earlier this year.

The company, which illegally operated in Kendricks Road and the former Junction Works site off Cemetery Road, sent a request to

the council for an environmental impact assessment to move.

A letter to the council, which was written on behalf of the firm by Smethwick-based QSP Consultancy, says the firm is due to submit a full planning application for a materials recycling facility at the site in the near future, located between the Wyrley and Essington Canal and the main entrance to Willenhall Industrial Estate.

Murder-plot woman starts six-year term

by Naomi Dunning

THE woman who said she wanted her partner 'wiped off the face of the earth' as part of a murder-plot has spent her first week behind bars after being given a six-year jail term.

Following Kelly Cliff's sentence last Thursday, it was revealed by West Midlands Police that it had taken eight months of painstaking investigative work to bring a watertight case against her.

Officers working on the inquiry told how they had never before come across anything like the case. Cliff had admitted saying during a conversation with her friend Dalton Bowen that she wanted Carl Gallagher to 'drop dead', but she insisted that she had never actually intended to be taken seriously.

But Mr Bowen did believe Cliff and was so shocked by the discussion that he went to police.

Detective Constable James Connell of Force CID, at Bloxwich police station, spoke after Cliff's sentencing about the woman who plotted to have her former husband killed.

He said: "She was a very cold and calculating individual who, as the judge said, failed to tell the truth throughout her trial.

Serious

"Her story was constantly changing, and many aspects of what she said just did not add up."

He added: "I have never covered a soliciting to murder case, it was a first for all of my team and really very unusual.

"There are very few cases like this nationally."

He added: "We just looked at it as we would any other case, and gathered the evidence that we could put before the court. I am very satisfied with the result and the six-year sentence. I think it shows how serious this offence is."

Mr Connell said they had approached Mr Gallagher about



Kelly Cliff, aged 40, who has been jailed for six years after trying to hire a hitman to kill her partner

giving the court a victim impact statement, but he had wanted nothing to do with the case.

He has now moved away from the area, and is believed to be living in Wales.

During the trial, Mr Bowen, who had lived near the couple in Kipling Road, Fallings Park, Wolverhampton, in the late 1990s, told the court: "She said she wanted her partner killed, wiped off the face of the earth."

He said: "I was meant to find out who would do it, when and how much." He said that he was so alarmed by the suggestion that he reported it to the police, and Cliff was arrested at the house she shared with Mr Gallagher in Brookfield Road, Aldridge, on May 5. Cliff, aged 40, denied soliciting

Mr Bowen to kill Mr Gallagher between April 2 and April 6.

She told a jury that she had talked to Mr Bowen about wishing Mr Gallagher dead but said she was only 'letting off steam' and never thought he would do anything about it.

She said she failed to mention the discussion to detectives following her arrest because she was frightened after being locked up in the cells overnight before being interviewed.

Cliff had repeatedly cheated on Mr Gallagher during their 22-year relationship. Wolverhampton Crown Court was told during the trial. The couple were said to have had a turbulent relationship, punctuated by many splits.

Cliff and Mr Gallagher had

married but divorced seven years ago before reuniting. Prosecutors told the court that the couple's rows were caused by Cliff's affairs with other men but said Mr Gallagher would forgive her and they would get back together again. In April this year - the time at which she approached Mr Bowen - Cliff was seeing another man, the jury heard.

Mr Hugh O'Brien Quinn, prosecuting, said: "In April this year, she was seeing another man."

"She said it was just a bit of fun and nothing serious but against that background she decided to be rid of her partner once and for all."

He added: "She wanted to be rid of him, rid of him permanently. It was a cold-blooded and calculated decision which she had thought about for two years."

Fines for illegal bus lanes' use top 2,300

MORE than 2,300 motorists have been fined for illegally using bus lanes in Walsall in just three months, council chiefs have revealed.

A specially-equipped vehicle with a mobile camera has been introduced by Walsall Council to crack down on queue jumpers.

There was an initial amnesty period during the summer but since September there have been 2,335 £60 tickets issued. The penalty is halved to £30 if paid within 14 days.

The council said the hard-hitting approach had come after regular requests from bus operators. The firms want to make sure motorists do not flout the rules.

Transport chief Councillor Adrian Andrew said: "I can confirm that the mobile enforcement camera car previously approved by cross-party full council for enforcement of bus lanes has been operating on a daily basis since July to ensure only authorised vehicles use the bus lanes in Walsall."

"In July and August warnings were issued to motorists using bus lanes. Since September fines have been issued to those motorists driving in designated bus lanes. A total of 2,335 fines have been issued since September."

There are bus lanes in Birmingham Road, Walsall; High Street, Bloxwich; Somerfield Place, Willenhall and Wolverhampton Road West, Bentley. They are also in use around the town centre in Stafford Street, Hatherton Road, Lichfield Street and St Paul's Street.

College wins top awards

A COLLEGE'S marketing department has received a gold and silver award at a national ceremony.

The Walsall College team scooped a gold award for Targeted Marketing, and a silver award for Printed Publication for the 2013/14 full-time course guide.

The College Marketing Network event was at the Hilton Hotel, in Warwick.

College marketing chief, Sally Day, said: "We had a very small budget and a short time frame, but working closely with our curriculum colleagues in health and social care, we put together a targeted campaign which generated huge interest."

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Hammer charge for neighbour

A MAN has appeared in court after his neighbour was attacked with a hammer.

Anthony Proud, aged 59, appeared at Walsall Magistrates Court last Thursday charged with causing grievous bodily harm to David Northall, 63.

Police were called to Kelvin Road, on the Beechdale Estate, on the previous Monday evening and found Mr Northall with a head wound, broken fingers and a fractured arm.

Mrs Maggie Meakin, prosecuting, told the court his injuries were initially believed to be life-threatening.

Proud, also of Kelvin Road, appeared in court wearing a blue T-shirt and black trousers. He spoke only to confirm his name and date of birth. No plea was indicated.

The case was sent to Wolverhampton Crown Court for a hearing on March 13. A 44-year-old man, who also lives on Beechdale Estate, was also arrested at the scene but has been released on bail pending further inquiries.

Pan on stove starts blaze

A MAN was rescued from his smoke-filled flat in Walsall after a neighbour raised the alert.

Firefighters were sent to the ground-floor apartment in Clews Close in the Caldmore area of Walsall at 2.30am last Thursday.

They banged on the door to raise the sleeping occupant who had left a pan heating on the stove. Walsall crew commander John Haynes said the man, in his 50s, had had a lucky escape. "Fortunately for him an upstairs neighbour had heard his smoke alarm going off." The tenant was given oxygen by paramedics at the scene but refused hospital treatment.

Laura cutting it with salon move

A FORMER college hair-dressing apprentice has opened a hair salon.

Laura Robinson, who attended Walsall College, has launched Churnhill Hair Salon in Aldridge.

The 31-year-old opened the salon in Churnhill Road last month and has taken on Mia Herald, who has also enrolled at the Wisemore campus, as an apprentice.

Clegg in £130m deal for 'new era of growth'

A £130 MILLION private investment which will create thousands of jobs is 'the beginning of a new era of growth and prosperity' for the Black Country, Nick Clegg has said.

The Deputy Prime Minister last week announced the City Deal, which is expected to create 5,800 manufacturing jobs in the next four years.

Walsall, Sandwell, Wolverhampton and Dudley will all benefit. The cash will be secured through investment by businesses in the West Midlands and further afield.

It will be used to help regenerate key sites across the Black Country, although officials have yet to reveal exactly which locations

will benefit. The deal will also see 2,800 long-term unemployed people receive 'intensive' support to help get them back into work.

Bosses hope that 900 of the 2,800 long-unemployed they will target will be helped into work.

Meanwhile, the Black Country Growth Factory is being set up with £3.1m of support to boost existing local businesses.

It will provide an online portal for local businesses to access local and national support services, including specialist support to small businesses in the high-value manufacturing sector.

Mr Clegg said: "This isn't pointless Whitehall jargon - this City Deal has the genuine power to change the fortunes of many people across the region by creating new jobs, boosting businesses and providing new housing."

Advantage

"This deal puts the power in the hands of local people who know best what skills are needed and how to make sure young people are prepared to take advantage of the opportunities that economic growth will bring."

Cities Minister Greg Clark, who announced the deal with Mr Clegg, said: "The jobs that it will create, the commercial

sites it will unlock and the skills it will provide to young people and the long-term unemployed will put the Black Country in a prime position to take advantage as the economy turns the corner."

Councillor Roger Lawrence, leader of Wolverhampton City Council, welcomed the deal on behalf of the local authorities and said: "The changes that will come about as a result of the deal will make a real difference to tackling youth unemployment and providing the skills for the jobs of the future."

Twenty cities and their surrounding areas in England including Coventry and Stoke will benefit from a City Deal.

'Urgent change' needed to halt school system slump

EDUCATION chiefs in Walsall admitted there is a need for 'urgent change' to the borough's school system after primaries were ranked among the worst in the country.

The borough's ranking among other local authorities makes for grim reading as it sits at 144 out of 152 nationwide.

That is, however, a higher ranking than last year when it was at 147. Figures show that 71 per cent of 11-year-olds achieved Level 4 or above in reading, maths and writing. Last year's figures show that 75 per cent of 11-year-olds in the borough achieved Level 4 or above overall in their Key Stage 2 SATs tests. That figure is below the national average of 79 per cent.

Councillor Rachel Andrew, the portfolio holder for children's services in the Walsall Council coalition, said: "The question we have to ask ourselves is 'Would I send my child to this Walsall school?' and the answer has to be a resounding yes."

Challenge
"The Ofsted report has created another opportunity for us all to take stock and focus on the fact that there is still work to do to improve the performance of schools in this borough - although we have got some great schools that are a real credit to their pupils, staff and parents."

"However, there is now a significantly increased recognition of the scale of our challenge and a growing understanding of how to tackle improvement for children in schools."

"School leaders and the authority recognise the need for urgent change. We are undertaking an intensive review of this school improvement service with a view to making it more fit for purpose," she said.

Almost 40 children's centre staff face being made redundant as 332 posts across the board are expected to go in the next financial year.

Louise Hughes, assisted director, told a meeting of the children's services scrutiny panel said staff that are at risk are currently being informed and the current figure is 37 posts, but efforts are being made to reduce this as much as possible.

Councillor Rachel Andrew, portfolio holder for children's services at Walsall Council Coalition said: "It is a challenging environment at the moment."

"We are trying to protect vulnerable services and look at areas where we can be more efficient."

Eva ready for Santa run at Arboretum



St Joseph's Catholic Primary school pupil Eva Abley will be taking part in a Santa fun run with her friends to raise cash

A LITTLE girl is getting into the festive spirit to help raise funds for her school.

Eva Abley, who was recently diagnosed with cerebral palsy, decided to organise a sponsored Santa run herself.

Money raised through sponsorship will go towards school funds at St Joseph's Catholic Primary in Darlaston where she is a pupil.

Around 30 youngsters have so far said they will take part in the event which will take place on Christmas Eve at Walsall Arboretum. Six-year-old Eva is dressing up as Santa on the day.

Her classmates have been told to wear fancy dress.

Janet Davies, parent support worker at the school, said: "It was all Eva's idea to hold the Santa Run."

"She wanted to do something for the school after she was diagnosed with

cerebral palsy. The youngsters can run or just walk the route.

"The money may be spent on something like new playground equipment or to fund a school trip. We haven't decided yet how to spend it."

Each child who takes part will receive a chocolate selection box at the end. The run starts at 10am.

Any youngsters who wish to sign up for the run should call the school on 0121 5686496.

NEWS

in brief

Runners at park bring in £5,000

AROUND £5,000 was raised for Acorns during an annual Santa Run.

Walsall Arboretum was given a Christmassy feel at the weekend as more than 220 people donned Santa suits, hats and beards to collect cash for children and their families.

There was a 5km run and 2km santa stroll as part of the fundraiser on December 8. Laura Heathfield, events manager at Acorns, said: "The atmosphere was magical."

For details on Acorns Children's Hospice, call 0845 120 6892 or visit the www.acorns.org.uk website.

Gangs prompt shelter scheme

A SHELTER that has become a meeting point for gangs outside shops in Walsall will be removed under new plans.

The shopfronts will be extended in Cresswell Crescent, Mossley and the plans were backed by ward councillor Louise Harrison. She said "Bringing the fronts of the shops into line with the concrete columns will get rid of the overhang which at the moment creates the perfect shelter for gangs."

"After a recent survey I undertook, I had meetings with the new owner of the shops to persuade them to make improvements."

Fun day boost for ambulance

AROUND £550 was raised for the Midlands Air Ambulance charity following a family fun day.

Representatives from Brownhills, Pelsall, Rushall and Sheffield Area Partnership presented the cash.

Sofia Voutianitis, regional fundraising manager for Midlands Air Ambulance Charity, said: "Each trip by the air ambulance costs on average £2,500 and we need to raise more than £6 million a year to fund the service."

College course joy for students

MORE students at a Black Country college are happy with their courses, according to newly released national figures.

Results from the National Student Survey show 90 per cent of higher education students at Walsall College were satisfied with their courses in 2013. This is five per cent increase on last year and puts Walsall in the top quarter of the UK.

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NEWS FEATURE

IN MY VIEW

WITH
MARK
ANDREWS

MOST bizarre story of the last week comes courtesy of Birmingham City Council, which will in future be requiring buskers to go through an audition process before they are allowed to ply their trade outside Snow Hill station.

I can see where the good burghers of Brum are coming from. I once worked in an office where the summer months meant a daily choice between stifling humidity, or opening a window directly above the wailing banshee on the street below. Usually we opted for stifling humidity, air fresheners were cheaper than earplugs.

But since when did local government become a leading authority on musical talent? You can imagine them now, all sat around the committee room table, sucking on their spectacles.

"Councillor Benson, you've got the high-waisted trousers, you can be Simon Cowell. Mr Jackson, you've done a few shifts on hospital radio, you're Louis Walsh."

"Oh, and Betty. You're good with the tea and biscuits, and your old man's a driving instructor, isn't he? Do you fancy being that bird with the funny name?"

"Great, all sorted. So tell us Mr Millichip, why are you here?"

HEARTWARMING tale about the 97-year-old Sid Ratcliffe, who married 90-year-old Iris Law at Wolverhampton Register Office last week.

There are probably cynics around who will say that the age gap is too big, and that Sid was looking for a young trophy wife. But wisely, the couple have been courting since 2001, so they haven't rushed into it.

You know they must have something special when they can bring a smile to the face of even a curmudgeonly old cynic like myself. Can't wait for the golden wedding.

THE report about the maggots at the doctor's surgery in Nottingham is horrifying, but equally I do think we place far too much emphasis on the fabric of buildings when it comes to the NHS.

Years ago, when I went to my GP, it would be in a small, slightly shabby surgery, where you could get an appointment in the evening, and you stood a good chance of seeing the same doctor every time you went.

Then along came a spot of the fabled 'investment', and the old surgery made way for a shiny new mini-clinic with a spacious waiting room, baby-changing facilities, specialist treatment rooms and around 20 staff. Last time I tried to make an appointment I was told it would have to be the following week - and I had no idea who I would see. I think I preferred things the way they were.

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Father Christmas greets Oliver Marple at the Birches Valley grotto in Rugeley



Santa, Lisa Walker and daughter Tahliya, aged two, in the Merry Hill grotto



Betty Green, aged six, meets Santa in his grotto at Sandwell Park Farm



Harry, three and Abigail, nine, Cyster meet Santa at the Victorian Arcade

It's a lotta grotto fun as children enjoy Santa visit

NOTHING says Christmas quite like a trip to Santa's grotto. Excited youngsters flock to see Father Christmas and tell him exactly what they want on the big day.

Increasing numbers of attractions across now offer their own Santa's grottos.

Some, like at Staffordshire's Shugborough Hall, are so popular that tickets to see Santa sell out weeks in advance. Others see queues build up of youngsters eager to pass on their wish lists.

For children, it is often one of the highlights of the festive period.

Some grottos offer youngsters a small memento of their visit, while others give children the chance to have their pictures taken with the man in the red suit. Shops and department stores first started offering their own grottos more than a century ago.

The tradition of Santa making special appearances at department stores and shopping centres in the run up to Christmas was started by James Edgar who introduced it in 1890 to his Massachusetts department store.

Glimpse

The practice was first seen in Great Britain in 1879 before spreading the following year to Australia and America.

It is believed the first ever department store Christmas grotto was in Liverpool at the Lewis's Bon Marche store, which opened as 'Christmas Fairland' in 1879.

Today, it is commonplace for department stores to have their own grottos.

Set within the 11th century Dudley Castle, a visit to the grotto at the town's zoo also includes a glimpse inside Sleeping Beauty's Palace.

Before meeting Father Christmas, children can look around the castle, which has been transformed with an animal forest, an antique spinning wheel and Princess Beauty asleep in a bed. Visitors are greeted by an elf before being taken into a warm room to meet the big man and receive a special gift.

Following the visit, families can view a glow in the dark puppet show before seeing the zoo's many animals.

Among the visitors so far are pupils and teachers from Lightwoods Primary



Santa in the grotto at Dudley Zoo and Castle with Lightwoods Primary pupils



At the Mander Centre grotto are Shayla-Mai Bratt, aged two, and dad John

School in Oldbury. Reception teacher Sarah Cawthorpe said: "I think it is a great grotto for the children to visit and see presents to take home."

Youngsters can sit alongside Santa on a small chair while they make their wishlist, or on request, can sit on his lap to have their pictures taken.

The grotto is open from 10am to 3.30pm every day. Tickets are purchased for 30-minute time slots. For children, it costs £9.50. For adults, it is £5.50.

A family ticket for two adults and two children costs £28.

At Merry Hill, the adventure takes

youngsters on a journey with Elbow the Elf who, with the help of a snowman, makes sure their presents reach them despite the efforts of 'Fumble the Bad Elf'.

Children and their families first go through to a mini cinema, where they don 'magic' glasses to watch a '5D' film of the story - complete with wind, lights and elf dust.

And the children's photographs, taken as they queue, are already included in the film on screen. A photo with Santa himself - and a present - complete the experience. Entry costs £2.50 for adults,

£4.95 per child and £12 for two adults with two children.

The children's fee includes a 50p charity donation to 'Help Harry Help Others'. The grotto is open on Saturdays from 10am to 7pm; Sundays from 10.30am to 5pm; weekdays until December 18 from 10am to 8pm; December 19, 20, 21 and 23 from 10am to 9pm and Christmas Eve from 9am to 5pm.

A wooden chalet-style grotto at Wolverhampton's Mander Centre is nestled on the bottom floor of the shopping centre. Among those who queued to pay him a visit was eight-year-old Blade Wrahton, who said: "Santa was really nice. I give it 10 out of 10."

Santa charges £4.25 for a present, £4 for a photo and £8 for a present and photo.

Set in the picturesque Cannock Chase, this grotto offers an authentic woodland. Young children are given a Christmas tree sapling to plant as well as a soft toy. Reindeer can also be found close by, grazing in their forest enclosure.

Reindeer

Angela Marple, who took sons Oliver and Joshua along with husband Nathan said: "We think it is the best grotto in the Midlands. It looks a bit like Lapland without the snow."

Entry costs £6 per child and on Friday from 4pm to 7pm and Saturday and Sunday from 10am to 4pm.

A wintry wonderland of penguins, polar bears and reindeer greet visitors to Santa's grotto at Sandwell Park Farm.

One of the first things children spy is a sleigh, which leads into Santa's workshop where they can meet the man himself and receive a gift.

Entry costs £6 on top of the normal £1.90 admission fee for adults and £1.40 for children. The grotto is open every weekend until December 22 from 10am to 4.30pm. Group bookings are available by calling 0121 553 0220.

Father Christmas sits on a huge gold-coloured chair as he greets children at the Victorian Arcade in Bradford Street, Walsall. An empty unit at the shopping centre has been transformed into a festive wonderland, with decorations and stockings lining the walls.

The Winter Wonderland is located between The Works and Acorns Charity Shop. Entry is £2.50 per child.

THROUGH THE YEARS

1983...

WOLVERHAMPTON Grand Theatre had welcomed 80,000 people through its doors since in the three months since it reopened. Chairman of the theatre board Geoffrey Norman said it had helped bring people into the city centre at night, and dispelled the myth that it was a 'no-go' area after dark.

A VICAR scrapped most of the Christmas celebrations at his church in protest at the modern trappings of the festive season. Christ Church in Lye would have no Nativity play or carol service, announced vicar Rev Graham Cooper, instead focusing on special New Year's Day services.

MEANWHILE, Father Christmas nearly failed to turn up for a function at an old people's home in Oldbury because a bus driver left him stranded.

1993...

BRITISH Prime Minister John Major and his Eire counterpart Albert Reynolds were on the brink of signing an historic declaration designed to bring peace to Northern Ireland. The agreement would pave the way for Sinn Fein being allowed to take part in talks on the future of Ulster - to the fury of many Unionists.

THREE Britons were freed from prison by Saddam Hussein following the intervention of former prime minister Sir Edward Heath. The men had been given long sentences for illegally entering Iraq, but the British Government insisted no deals had been made to secure their release.

THE threat of fascism hung over Russia after the far-right Liberal Democrats achieved the biggest share of the vote in the parliamentary elections, taking 70 seats.

2003...

DEPOSED Iraqi president Saddam Hussein was finally captured by US forces after eight months on the run. The dishevelled-looking dictator was shown on television, sporting a long, grey beard, but was said to be in good health. Saddam had not been seen since the invasion led by British and American forces in April.

THE jury in the Soham murder trial was sent out to consider its verdict. Ian Huntley, a 29-year-old school caretaker, denied murdering 10-year-olds Holly Wells and Jessica Chapman. His fiancée, Maxine Carr, a 26-year-old classroom assistant, denied conspiracy to pervert the course of justice.

VETERAN rocker Mick Jagger was at Buckingham Palace to receive his knighthood - but in the true spirit of rock 'n' roll rebellion, he wore trainers with his lounge suit.

Fusion Hair Salon Now Open



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Comprehensive disagreement

S CROSS (Express and Star letters, December 3) attributes the allegedly unsatisfactory behaviour of a group of children to their education in a comprehensive school. The writer claims such institutions are the root of moral and educational decline after the "disintegration of the grammar school system".

If he or she is right, we should expect to find beautifully mannered children and high educational attainment in those local authorities in which the "grammar school system" still flourishes, of which Walsall is one - where loutish behaviour is completely unknown and teenage boys all doff their caps as they chivalrously offer their

seats to old ladies! The linguistic curiosity of a so-called "grammar school system" lies in the simple fact that the vast majority of pupils never saw such a school.

In my year at primary school, another lad and I went to the boys' grammar school and one little girl to the corresponding girls' school. Of the rest, a few went to second-tier "high schools", and the majority to secondary modern schools, with virtually no chance of proceeding to university.

Funnily enough, we never seem to hear anyone advocating the return of a "secondary modern system".

A T HARRISON, Leamore, Walsall

Criminality in poor provision of education

I RECENTLY had a letter from Paul Sheehan, Chief Executive of Walsall Council.

He regrets my dim view of Walsall's managers.

Does he read Ofsted's school reports? I have to doubt it. This week another of Walsall's primary schools, reported as being placed in 'special measures' - the third one in a month.

I understand it can be a criminal charge for failing to send your child to school.

Should it be a criminal charge for these highly paid civil servants, for failing to provide an adequate educational service? And to provide a running supervisory role? Why wait for Ofsted before remedial changes are made?

Head teachers and teaching staff should be taken on for the task, when considered capable, not just because they hold a degree - and suited to the catchment's area.

RAY HAMMOND
Alexandra Way, Aldridge

Smokers are the oppressed

RE: THE best of Peter Rhodes, December 5.

Congratulations to Peter Rhodes, for his outright condemnation of the new proposal for a smoking ban inside and outside English hospitals.

We nicotine addicts are just another oppressed minority in a tyrannical NHS system.
GRAEME CONNIGALE
King Street
Palfrey

Unite group's actions were intimidation

IN RESPONSE to the letter of November 27 from an S Blakemore of Wednesfield who claims that the review wanted by David Cameron into recent activities by certain Unite members, is nothing more than a "Tory stunt".

The writer describes himself as a Unite member for over 40 years: "I can categorically state that bullying and intimidation are not the kind of things that trade unions do". Really? Then what are the actions of Unite members who turn up in numbers outside the private house of a company director, to put pressure on him to back down in a dispute, if not intimidation?

In the recent Grange-mouth dispute Ineos directors and managers were directly targeted by Unite members using their 'infamous' 'leverage' tactics.

But do not take my word for it. Take a look at Unite's own website, where it offers a definition of the practice of leverage it employs.
S LAMBERTON,
Aldridge

LETTERS to the Editor

POST

Walsall Chronicle, Chronicle Editorial, 51-53 Queen Street, Wolverhampton WV1 1ES

Letters should be brief and MUST include name, address and telephone number of the writer. The Editor reserves the right to condense letters.

E-MAIL

walsallchronicle@expressandstar.co.uk

Religious workshop has important role

I FIND the dispute at Littleton Green Community School a little confusing. Are parents up in arms about the ham-fisted way in which head teacher Lynn Small handled the issue of the proposed religious workshop at Stafford University? Or are they angry about the objective of it? In which case, I suggest they at least give further consideration to this issue.

The majority of wars around the globe evolve in the name of religion and the inherent ignorance of each other's cultural beliefs, and will continue to do so unless we encourage cross religious/cultural awareness.

A KYTE, Great Wyrley

Trolley folly for store visitor

I AM 81 year-old lady and after shopping in Hooty's store in Willenhall I was returning the trolley when a girl asked me if I would like her to take my trolley back. She grabbed my trolley with the coin in and ran to the stand. I shouted after her but she had retrieved my coin and ran to a van close by.

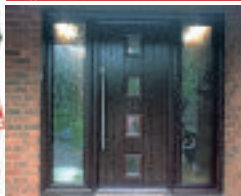
When I had got my wits about me she was in the passenger seat grinning all over her face and they sped away. It's only a pound coin, but if they go to every shopping centre and target people like me, who are taken in by what I thought was a kind gesture they could end up with their ill gotten gains.

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NEWS

Young and old join in with Christmas fun

STUDENTS brightened up Christmas for a group of pensioners when they staged a special Christmas party.

The youngsters from Blue Coat Academy in Walsall have held a pensioner's Christmas party every December for more than 30 years.

And it is a tradition sixth formers at the Birmingham Street school say they are determined to keep alive. A total of 90 pensioners from Walsall and Wolverhampton attended this year's event.

Guests were treated to a performance by the Voices of Hope choir, made up of cancer survivors from across Sandwell and Birmingham, before they took part in a sing-along of musical favourites and festive hits. Bingo was also on offer as well as a spread of party food.

The school's learning resource centre co-ordinator Sandra Vernon said: "When young people get a lot of bad publicity it is great to show the good that they can do."



Taking part in the special party are Elsie Broughton and Nisha Ali with Mari-Ann Frankou, Jessie Desai, Krupal Ramesh, Mark Richards, his daughter Susan, Afraz Ahmed, Ann Walton and Iris Mallaband, who enjoyed a sing-along to musical hits

£100 reward for details on fly-tippers is backed

REWARDING people who report fly-tippers with £100 will send out a 'strong message' to the culprits, it has been claimed.

A six-month trial of an incentive scheme to cut down on fly-tipping has been given the full backing by Walsall Council's cabinet. The council is proposing the cash reward for members of the public who provide information leading to a prosecution.

Councillor Zahid Ali, Walsall's public health chief, said fly-tipping was a long-standing issue in Walsall and the new measures were needed. "Enough is enough," he said. "There

needs to be much more done to tackle this problem. This will send a strong message to the culprits."

Pheasey Park Farm councillor Adrian Andrew said: "This is a tremendous step forward. These people need to be stopped and they need to be caught."

Focus

The environmental crime reward scheme will be introduced from the start of next year, to be reviewed at the end of June. Council leader Mike Bird said fly-tipping was 'unacceptable' and warned culprits: "We will find you. We will prosecute you and we will lock you up. This is one of the best things I have

seen happen to tackle the problem in a long time."

Although tackling fly-tipping will be the main focus of the borough-wide initiative, it will also incorporate other environmental crimes.

The cost of dealing with all fly-tipping was around £140,000 in the last financial year. The reward policy will be funded from fixed-penalty notices served through environmental enforcement actions.

The council has already introduced six undercover cameras as part of its ongoing war against fly-tipping. It has successfully prosecuted residents for leaving a trail of rubbish in parts of the borough.

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NEWS

10 months in jail for HGV driver found to be banned

A MAN who fraudulently gained work as a HGV driver after being given a driving ban has been locked up for 10 months.

Simon Hines was rumoured when he was stopped by police on suspicion of speeding on a busy road in Walsall.

by Lisa Wright

Further investigations were carried out and it was found Hines was a disqualified driver, Wolverhampton Crown Court heard.

Hines had been convicted of drink driving and given a 14-month disqualification in December last year. But the 31-year-old managed to gain employment with AS Taylor Transport Ltd in Burton-On-Trent in August by showing misleading documents.

Wolverhampton Crown Court was told. Mr David Lees, prosecuting, said his daily duties involved driving a 44-ton heavy goods vehicle around the UK. Hines was stopped by police in October on suspicion of speeding on the A34 Birmingham Road.

Mr Lees said when an officer processed the necessary paperwork a few days later, he discovered that Hines was a disqualified driver.

Calls were made to AS Taylor Transport Ltd and Hines was taken to the police station where he admitted what he had done to officers during an interview.

Hines, of Wye Dale, Church Gresley, Swadincote, admitted driving while disqualified, driving with no insurance and a charge of fraud for failing to disclose his driving ban.

Mr Patrick Currie, defending, said Hines had pleaded guilty at the first opportunity and was also forthcoming at the police station. He said he had been under financial pressures to pay rent and had also discovered his partner was pregnant.

Mr Currie said: "He accepts what he did was foolish and wrong. He has shown remorse." Mr Currie said Hines had since lost his job with AS Taylor Transport Ltd but had started work as a transport manager for another company.

Judge John Warner jailed Hines for 10 months and handed him a fresh 12-month driving ban, which came into force immediately.

School's top ranking



Head Matthew Draper, Ka-Ho Chui, Saijal Patel, and Martha Harding, who have achieved SATs success PUPILS and staff at a Walsall school are celebrating success for a third year running.

Mayfield Preparatory School sits at 38 in the league tables for the top 100 national prep schools list for its Key Stage 2 SATs. It is the third successive year it has made the list.

The ranking is for the attainment of its year six pupils. Delighted Mayfield head Matthew Draper said the Sutton Road school has steadily climbed the tables in recent years and it was now among the top independent primaries in the region with results consistently on a par with many larger schools around the country.

"Year after year, Mayfield consistently maintains high standards. This is thanks to the tremendous children, a fabulous team of staff, very supportive governors and a strong partnership with the parents. The league tables next year," Mr Draper said.

Help to log council boost

FIREWOOD from parks and woods is being offered for sale to raise cash to help with maintenance. Staff from Walsall Council's clean and green services run a wood processing centre at the environmental depot in Pelsall Road, Brownhills. Residents can buy logs for £20.

Tim Cleary, Walsall countryside operations ranger, said: "All of the firewood is seasoned hardwood sourced and processed from woods and parks throughout Walsall."

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NEWS

Royal appointment for student winners



Honoured - Award winners from the Black Country University Technical College in the Buckingham Palace ballroom

STUDENTS rubbed shoulders with royalty as they became the first recipients of a prestigious new award.

The group of 150 students from schools in Walsall and Staffordshire were presented with bronze, silver and gold Duke of York awards for technical education.

Teenagers aged 16 to 18 from the Black Country University Technical College in Walsall and the JCB Academy in Rocester headed to Buckingham Palace. The awards, which were presented by Prince Andrew, recognise the talent and excellence of young people who have chosen technical education.

Four students were also presented with awards for outstanding achievement.

Chris Hilton, principal of the Black Country UTC in Vernon Way, said: "All students will achieve their ambitions of working in the engineering sector."

£24,000 benefits fraud woman gets court order

by Lisa Wright

A BENEFITS fraudster who cheated the system out of more than £24,000 over 10 years after failing to declare substantial savings has been handed a community order.

Deborah Lavender failed to declare that she had a healthy bank account which disqualified her from receiving state help, a court heard.

The 48-year-old from Walsall at one stage had more than £64,000 in her account, although it was accepted that the bulk of the money was not hers but her partner's.

She had made a declaration 23 years ago stating that she was ill and unable to work and had continued over the years to claim financial support on the

basis that she had no other source of income. The mother of two had been entitled to some benefits during the period but not as much as the payments made.

Department of Work and Pensions investigators discovered that in 2001 she had £11,000 savings and in 2011 her bank account held more than £31,000. At their highest, her savings reached £64,096 but the court heard that £45,000 belonged to her partner from the sale of his flat and was used for paying his debts.

Mr Patrick Currie, defending, said that Lavender also had a joint account holding £10,000. The cash belonged to her mother who had been trying to keep it secret from Lavender's father, he told Wolverhampton Crown Court.

Lavender, of Wesson Road, Darlaston, admitted two counts of failing to notify a change in circumstances and three of making a false statement in relation to council tax benefits and income support between October 2001 and February 2011.

The court heard she had had no previous convictions until the previous week when she was convicted of drink-driving. She was found to be four times over the legal limit and banned from driving for 30 months.

Mr Currie said that she has battled alcohol addiction and more recently had been diagnosed with bipolar disorder. Lavender was spoken highly of in character references and had paid back £7,000 of the over-payment. She was given a supervision order for 12 months with a requirement for alcohol treatment.

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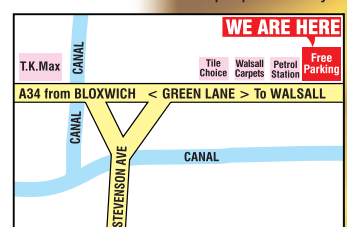


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Teacher Ellen is making history

A TEACHER at a school in Walsall is setting off for Hong Kong and Singapore to direct a new theatre show.

Ellen Mills has been chosen to put together the Horrible Histories play in the coming weeks before it heads to London.

The speech and drama teacher at Mayfield Preparatory School has directed a number of plays and says she intends to seize this 'great opportunity'. She also runs theatre activities for children and leads summer schools for The Theatre Royal in Newcastle upon Tyne. She also directs Theatre First youth productions at Great Wyrley High School.

She used to be the education director and assistant director for the Birmingham Stage Company in London and left to go freelance. She has now been invited to direct their productions of Awful Egyptians and Terrible Tudors touring Hong Kong and Singapore and London in the new year.

She said: "It's a great opportunity for me, and I'm thrilled to be asked."



Mayfield Preparatory School tutor Ellen Mills is toasted by pupils Shriya Pillay, aged nine, and Yahia Al-Rawi, five

Project takes shape

IT HAS been years in the pipeline – but the long-awaited £1.3 million expansion plan at a church used by more than 1,500 people a month is now starting to take shape.

Aldridge Parish Church, at The Green, won planning approval almost three years ago to demolish its rectory, church rooms and garage and create a two-storey building.

Demolition work has now taken place, foundations have been laid and the walls are going up.

More than £700,000 has now been raised through congregation donations, with further funds pulled in through grants and from a land sale, but the scheme still has a shortfall of just over £300,000.

Church bosses have applied for further grants and a series of fund-raising events have been planned for next year. Aldridge-based building contractor Shaylor is carrying out the work and it is hoped it will be finished by early summer next year.

Features of the new building will include a central foyer area, cafe, offices, toilets, kitchen, children's room, function room, rector's study, lounge and meeting room.

The new church rooms will replace the crumbling temporary



Aldridge Parish Church warden Pete Ford at the site of the project

classrooms that have been in use since 1948.

Although the church said the rooms were in poor condition, bosses admitted demolishing them marked the 'end of an era' for users of the church. The project was temporarily in limbo until a new rector, John Coyne, was inducted into the role in March last year.

Church warden Pete Ford said a service had been held prior to the demolition work to allow members to say farewell to the old rooms.

He said: "Demolition finally started at the beginning of September, once the asbestos had been

removed. Then work began preparing the ground and putting in the footings, although the wet weather caused some delay.

"The contractor has worked hard to try to regain some of the time lost and now you can see the outline of the downstairs rooms as the walls are beginning to go up."

Mr Ford said: "Since we first launched the project a total of £716,300 has been given by the congregation and a further £215,637 has been pledged. We have raised a further £40,012 through fundraising and grant applications."

Driver stops to help PC give chase

A PASSING driver helped a police officer chase down a suspected car thief when he pulled over and the PC hopped in to hitch a ride.

The good samaritan spotted Pc Sharon Cartridge as she was in danger of losing sight of the suspect. The driver stopped and the police officer jumped in to drop her off near Littleton Street East, Walsall. The suspect was arrested at wasteland off nearby Lower Forster Street minutes later.

Pc Cartridge was walking along Lichfield Road at around 9pm when a description of a man suspected of breaking into a silver Mercedes in Dog Kennel Lane was radioed in. She saw a man matching his description running towards Lower Forster Street. The 21-year-old ran off and was about to disappear from view when the passing motorist stopped.

The suspect was taken into custody for questioning in relation to two other thefts. Pc Cartridge, from Walsall police station, said: "I'd really like to personally thank the driver who came to my aid and would appeal for him to contact me."

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NEWS

Couple's nuptials in 90s



I certainly do! Sid Ratcliffe, aged 97, with his new wife Iris 90, smiling as the confetti flies over them

THEY say you're never too old to fall in love and that good things come to those who wait.

And both of those were true for a couple who have finally become man and wife - aged 97 and 90. Between them, Sid and Walsall-born Iris Ratcliffe may have 187 years on the clock but age has proved no barrier for them sealing their love. Both widowed, the couple's romance began in 2001.

Since then the pair's romance has blossomed and after years of Sid trying to cajole Iris into letting him put a ring on her finger, she finally agreed six weeks ago.

Secretary

There were tears and laughter in abundance during a beautiful ceremony at Wolverhampton Register Office yesterday, where friends and family delighted in Sid and Iris' long overdue day. The bride said she it was never too late to get married, even at 90. "It's been a beautiful day," the former secretary said. "I met him at a bus stop and he swept me off my feet. It's definitely never too late - it's love."

Cheeky Sid asked for the registrar to speak up during the service and said 'yes I certainly do' when asked if he would agree to marry Iris. Afterwards the former Chubb tool room supervisor from Bilston said: "It's been a lovely day."

Fees increase may result in struggle for sport groups

SPORTS clubs in Walsall have said they may struggle to survive if council plans to raise the cost of annual fees are pushed through.

Walsall Council has announced that annual fees for bowls clubs could rise from £810 to £6,605 and charges paid by children's football teams will be more than quadrupled, while cricket clubs will have to shell out double the current amount.

It comes as the authority is proposing £19 million of cuts in its 2013/14 budget.

Costs for junior football teams will go up from £382 to £1,618 and cricket teams who pay £1,059 to play on Saturdays will be hit with a £2,893 annual charge including £500 in maintenance.

Peggy Williams, a 71-year-old member of the Brownhills and Oak Park bowling club that has met in Lichfield Road, Walsall Wood, every week for 30 years, said: "We have 37 members and most of them are over 70."

"We are being urged to do exercise and keep fit but how are we supposed to pay these fees? There is no way we can raise that money."

And Cynthia Bratt, of the Pleck Sons of Rest bowling club, which has 26 members, said: "It's not just good exercise, there is a social side too. I don't see how we would be able to continue."

Under the proposals, cricket clubs who play on

by Adam Burling

Sundays will pay £2,893 - up from £1,226 - including £500 maintenance costs. Senior football teams will shell out £1,817 for sites with no changing rooms, where they currently pay £804.

Pitches with changing facilities will cost £2,567 - including a £750 pavilion cleaning charge - up from £1,677.

Jonathan Wide, manager of the Ashmore Park Rangers under-nines football team, said they could look to move to Wolverhampton or Staffordshire. He said: "We get about 20 teams on a matchday and they all chip in to pay the costs, but they'll never be able to manage this."

Councillor Anthony Harris, portfolio holder for leisure and culture in Walsall Council's coalition, said: "People can still have their say by emailing budgetconsultation@walsall.gov.uk."

Eyesores to be bought up

LONG-STANDING eyesores will be bought up by Walsall Council in a bid to help tackle rundown buildings, under new plans. Compulsory purchase orders will be sought if necessary for six homes which have been empty for an average of more than six-and-a-half years. Action has already been taken to cut down on the number of long-term unused and unsightly properties, with a 23 per cent reduction between October 2011 and 2013. Six prominent properties in the borough remain empty, in Coalpool and Bloxwich.

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Below are just a few of our recommended businesses. To find out more about them and other local gems visit www.thebestof.co.uk/walsall

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NEWS

Grayling backs prison during academy visit



Secretary of State for Justice Chris Grayling talks to students at Willenhall E-ACT Academy in Furzebank Way

JUSTICE Secretary Chris Grayling says he has every confidence that troubled Oakwood prison will be able to turn its fortunes round.

The Conservative MP was in the Black Country last week visiting Willenhall E-ACT Academy. HMP Oakwood in Featherstone – the UK's biggest prison with 1,600 inmates – has been dubbed 'Jokewood' after a damning report listed a string of criticisms over its performance.

But Mr Grayling defended the 'super-prison', saying: "We have to remember, every new prison – public or private – takes a while to get embedded in. Oakwood is a really good facility. I'm sure they will get things sorted out. I'm confident it will be good. They are doing an awful lot of work there. It is just teething problems." Shadow Justice Secretary Sadiq Khan previously called for G4S, which runs Oakwood, to be removed if improvements are not made in six months.

Mr Grayling also commented during his visit on proposals to increase MPs' pay by 11 per cent, saying: "We have all said it's not appropriate for MPs to have a big rise."

At Willenhall E-ACT Academy in Furzebank Way, Mr Grayling spoke to law students from the Sixth Form about his role in Parliament.

Buskers may have to face X Factor-style judges panel

STREET buskers will need a permit to perform in Walsall town centre and may have to battle through X Factor-style auditions to prove they are good enough, under new plans.

Walsall Council's licensing team is proposing to bring in the new street entertainment policy, which aims to ensure the town only attracts 'quality' entertainment and that buskers do not become a nuisance.

The scheme will also introduce rules for where buskers can perform in the town centre and for how long. If they do not comply with the code of conduct, the authority may remove their permit.

Permits may also be removed if the council receives complaints from the public or representations from the police, fire authority or another partner.

Views are being sought on the proposals, including whether buskers should have to audition in front of a panel to assess their suitability. The panel would be made up of a representative from businesses in the town centre, the community and an elected member.

The council says most forms of entertainment may be performed in Walsall as long as it does not present a hazard to other people, is not indecent or in bad taste and does not damage the high-

way and street furniture. Entertainment not permitted includes acts involving fire, knives, weapons or similar objects, drumming unless it is a minor element of a performance, and any striptease or nudity.

Councillor Zahid Ali, Walsall Council's portfolio holder for public health and protection, said: "The plans are only draft at the moment and we would welcome feedback from local residents."

Buskers must be over 18 and will need to complete an application form from the council, plus proof of public liability and possibly a small fee. Comments can be submitted by December 31 to licensingenforcement@walsall.gov.uk or by post to Street Entertainment Consultation, Licensing Enforcement, Walsall Council, Civic Centre, Darwall Street, Walsall, WS1 1TP.

MP writes to bus chiefs

AN MP has written to transport bosses amid concerns over funding cuts to the Ring and Ride service. Walsall North MP David Winnick said the vulnerable should not have to bear the brunt of cuts. A rally is being staged in Walsall on January 18, amid concerns the service will be affected as part of £14.6 million Centro cuts. He said: "In my letter, I mention that a number of constituents have already contacted me over this. No doubt this has been similar in other areas."

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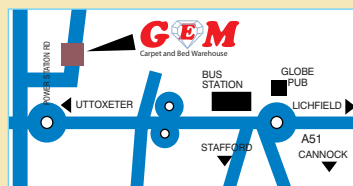


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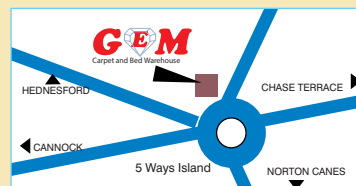


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Now that's what I call a 30th pop anniversary!



Now 86 – 30 years since the first in the pop compilation, taking music from Culture Club to One Direction



Today's pop stars, Katy Perry, above left, goes for a demure girl next door look while Lady Gaga goes for scary doll look

FASHIONS and even the medium has changed, from New Edition to 1D, from vinyl and cassette via CD to MP3, but the **Now** series of compilation albums just go on and on.

This series officially called **Now That's What I Call Music!** has celebrated 30 years and reached its 86th edition. The format has remained much the same, a jukebox – youngsters, ask your nan – worth of the latest pop hits packed into one package.

Rock fans may sneer that **Now** compilations are mere throwaway music, an audio Big Mac compared with the more sustaining fare of the serious artist. But that's the point, this is casual consumer pop, packed with quick fixes of fun sounds to make a boring commute pass more quickly – and there's nothing wrong with that provided an alternative is available.

The first **Now** featured Culture

Club, Phil Collins, Rod Stewart and a vengeance judging by a **Now 86** line-up including Katy Perry, One Direction, Jessie J, Lady Gaga, will.i.am, The Wanted, Lily Allen, James Arthur.

Of course, you can also turn to specialist **Now** releases. There is **Now That's What I Call Club Hits** which, given the influence of dance music on pop, is similar to the mainstream series as it features Avicii, Jason Derulo, Robin Thicke, Naughty Boy, Rita Ora, Jessie J, and Lady Gaga.

Now That's What I Call Disney features just about every popular song you can think of from Disney movies and **Now That's What I Call Christmas** has 63 festive tunes to soundtrack the big day from turkey stuffing to port-induced headache.

Christmas is the traditional time to hear from Cliff Richard and the origi-

nal Britpop superstar (if you don't count Tommy Steele) is back but minus mistletoe and wine. Cliff has gone to his 1950s roots on his 100th album **The Fabulous Rock 'n' Roll Songbook**. It includes his new song **Fabulous**, which sounds rather like Elvis Presley's **Teddy Bear**, which Cliff also covers. The King himself is represented by **The Nation's Favourite Elvis Songs** album, as chosen on TV.

As for today, Katy Perry roars back into contention as a top pop princess with album **Prism** including her hit **Roar**. But Lady Gaga seems to lose the plot with **Artpop**. She has taken her eye off the (Monster) ball with this lacklustre offering of so-so disco with a smattering of rap. There is a bit of shock but very little awe. If she spent as much time on the music as the outlandish outfits then maybe it would not be such a disappointment. **LB**

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Bradford Place, Walsall Science & Art Institute, in 1935



Bloxwich, with the Electric Theatre cinema, right, circa 1910



Pelsall Common, near Walsall Rd and Church Rd, early 1900s



The Hawthorn Inn, High St, Walsall Wood, about 1924



Military parade from King St along Pinfold St, Darlaston - early 1900s



The Croft, Aldridge, St Mary's Church and Manor Farm, in the early 1900s

Diversity of areas which became part of borough

THE towns and villages that today fall within the administrative boundary of Walsall Metropolitan Borough are remarkably diverse in character; historically, geographically and socially.

That diversity reflects change and upheaval over centuries, as the area moved from an agricultural economy in earliest times to light industrial, then heavy, making a major contribution to the 18th-19th century Industrial Revolution and, after the turmoil of the 20th century, moving towards post-industrial.

As a result, apart from central shopping areas, some places are now urban, sometimes mixed with industry, others

by Stuart Williams

are suburban or even semi-rural. Still others clearly retain their character as part of the historic Black Country, yet more are equally clearly not within that area, despite being close.

The move in 1974 from Staffordshire to the new West Midlands 'county', which around the same time saw the enlargement of the old Walsall County Borough into a new, enlarged Walsall Metropolitan Borough, also had its effect, not only with an increase in the borough's population but also through the bringing together of places with even more differences in their local heritage, history and loyalties.

All of the towns and villages within

today's metropolitan borough are, despite their apparent merging on modern maps, highly distinctive and each has its own character and local population who are proud of that.

Indeed, while all acknowledge their location within the borough, most would also first state proudly their allegiance to their own home town, village, district, patch - even housing estate! This is one of the things that makes the study of history within the ever-changing Walsall Metropolitan Borough so fascinating, so rich and so varied - as you can see from the historic pictures presented here.

Now, as a staff member of Walsall Local History Centre, I have tried to both reflect and salute that diversity and distinctiveness by writing the

centre's latest book, Walsall Borough Past & Present, presenting a series of short histories of 10 of Walsall's towns and villages, with past and present photographs.

Of course, there is much, much more to discover about all of these places and more, here at the centre, than you could find in any book. Why not come and let us show you?

Prints of pictures shown and thousands more are available to purchase by special order, as well as a wide range of books, from Walsall Local History Centre. For local and family history, drop into the centre in Essex Street, which is part of Walsall Council. Telephone 01922 721305. For more information online see www.walsall.gov.uk/localhistorycentre

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Marking 75th year of Rep's festive fun

WITH 75 years of pantomimes and performances under their belt, Oldbury Rep's production of Jack and the Beanstalk promises to be a giant of a family panto.

This production of the well known fairytale has been written by Alan Wood, the group's longest serving member.

The group celebrated its 75th anniversary this year and has performed more than 400 shows over the years.

This is the fifth time the theatre has put on Jack and the Beanstalk since their first production in 1978.

It runs from Friday, January 10, to Saturday, January 18.

Tickets: Adults £10, concessions £9. Call 0121 552 2761 or visit the www.oldburyrep.org website.

It's Mother Goose for Stourbridge

STOURBRIDGE Pantomime Company are once again treading the boards in a seasonal favourite.

The group, which has been going since 1969, will present classic panto Mother Goose at Stourbridge Town Hall following a successful production of Cinderella last year.

In 2011 the group won the best pantomime in the Black Country award at the national Operatic and Dramatic Association West Midlands ceremony.

Mother Goose runs from January 18 to 25. Tickets are adults £13, concessions £9. Call 01384 836963 or see the www.stourbridgepanto.co.uk website.

How to look good in panto

HE'S used to telling us how to look good naked but Gok Wan will swap fashion for panto fun to star in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* at Birmingham Hippodrome.

Joanne is the wicked queen



Joanne Malin plays the villainous Queen Eviline

A TRADITIONAL panto with audience participation returns to The Garrick Theatre with TV newsreader Joanne Malin as Queen Eviline in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*.

The Lichfield theatre is celebrating 10 years of panto. It is produced completely in-house, with no touring company in sight, and features a professional cast. Children from local dance schools, including Bojangles in the city, and a live band will feature.

The show runs until Sunday, January 5. Tickets cost Adults £22.50 or £20, children £13.50 or £12.50. Contact 01543 412121 or see www.lichfieldgarrick.com

The TV fashion guru plays the Man in the Mirror, and stars alongside EastEnders actor John Partridge, who is best known for playing Christian in the BBC soap, as Prince Charming.

The star-studded cast also includes television and film legend Stephanie Beacham, who appeared in *Dynasty*, and who will take to the stage as The Wicked Queen.

Song and dance man Gary Wilmot will also star in the show in his first appearance as a panto dame.

Danielle Hope, aged 21, who won the BBC's talent show *Over the Rainbow*, to appear as Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz* at the London Palladium will be taking the role of Snow White.

No actual dwarfs will be appearing in the show though, with the magnificent seven being played by physical theatre actors wearing special costumes to make them look small. The production runs from Thursday, December 19 to Sunday, February 2.

Ticket prices range from £12 to £39. For further details contact 0844 338 5000 or visit www.birminghamhippodrome.com



Are you sure about that collar girlfriend? Gok Wan with Stephanie Beacham and John Partridge in costume for *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* at Birmingham Hippodrome which opens tonight and continues until February 2

Sleeping Beauty at the Grand

WOLVERHAMPTON'S Grand Theatre has launched *Sleeping Beauty* which continues until January 18 starring comedian and former King of the I'm a Celebrity jungle Joe Pasquale as Muddles.

His is joined by former Coronation Street star Lucy Evans as Princess Beauty and international cabaret artist Ceri Dupree as Queen Passionella.

A total of 59,000 people went to see last year's show, Jack and the Beanstalk, during its six week run. Bosses at the Lichfield Street theatre say *Sleeping Beauty* is set to be the theatre's most popular panto yet.

It runs until January 18 and tickets range from £16.50 to £26.50. Concessions available. Contact 01902 429212 or see www.grandtheatre.info for further details.

Dick Whittington turning to Forest

NOW in its fifth year at the Leamore venue, the Forest Arts Centre's panto has become the biggest in Walsall.

The show features professional actors alongside members of Walsall Youth Theatre, which is also based at the Hawbush Road venue.

Dick Whittington runs until this Sunday. Tickets are £6. Call 0845 111 2898 or see www.forestartscentre.co.uk

Advice from your local NHS to keep well this winter

NHS
Walsall Clinical Commissioning Group

Season's Greetings from Dr Amrik Gill, Chair of Walsall CCG

Although Christmas may be the season to be jolly, we all need to look after our health to make this festive season memorable for the right reasons. Here at Walsall CCG we have put together some tips to help you stay safe and well during Christmas and the New Year:

- **COLD WEATHER** is especially dangerous for older people or people with Long Term Conditions such as diabetes, chest problems and arthritis. Keep warm, keep well. Dress warmly with several light layers of clothing, eat properly and have regular warm drinks.
- **STOCK UP YOUR MEDICINE CABINET** with paracetamol, ibuprofen, indigestion remedies, cough mixture and other medication that your family needs. If you need any repeat prescriptions, allow plenty of time to collect these from your GP.
- **DRINK IN MODERATION:** excessive alcohol consumption can affect your whole body – not just the liver. Never drink and drive.
- If you have diarrhoea and vomiting, you may have the winter vomiting bug **NOROVIRUS**. This is easily spread through contact between people. Limit the spread of the virus by washing your hands and keeping hard surfaces clean. Drink plenty of fluids and use simple painkillers and rehydration mixtures. **DON'T GO TO A&E.** If the symptoms continue for longer than 48 hours or you feel very poorly, call your GP or 111.
- If you have **COLD OR FLU-LIKE SYMPTOMS**, it's best to stay at home, keep warm, drink plenty of fluids and take regular painkillers such as paracetamol or ibuprofen.

Wishing you a happy and healthy festive period!

Dr Amrik Gill
Walsall Clinical Commissioning Group

Choose Well this winter

CALL NHS 111 for all non-urgent health queries. Lines are open 24/7 for expert advice and information.



Need a GP over Christmas and New Year?

GP PRACTICES will close at their normal time on Tuesday 24 December, and open at their normal time on Friday 27 December. They will close again at their normal time on Tuesday 31 December and will open at their normal time on Thursday 2 January 2014. Practices are closed Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day.

GP WALK IN CENTRE Market Square, Digbeth, Walsall WS1 1QZ Tel 01922 605730. Open 8am - 8pm on weekdays, weekends and bank holidays.

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- **A KARIM'S CHUCKERY PHARMACY**, 7-9 Kinnery Street, The Chukery, Walsall WS1 2LD Tel 01922 613786. Open 12 noon - 3pm
- **BLACKWOOD PHARMACY**, 87 Blackwood Road, Streetly, Sutton Coldfield B74 3PW Tel 0121 353 4866. Open 12 noon - 3pm

OPEN BOXING DAY: 26 DECEMBER

- **PLECK PHARMACY**, 246A Wednesbury Road WS2 9QN Tel 01922 646555. Open 10am - 6pm
- **SAINSBURY'S PHARMACY**, Reedswood Way WS2 8XA Tel 01922 633876. Open 10am - 5pm
- **LLOYDS PHARMACY**, 169 High Street, Bloxwich WS3 3LH Tel 01922 476108. Open 10am - 2pm
- **ASDA**, 42 George Street, Walsall WS1 1RS Tel 01922 704130. Open 9am - 6pm
- **ASDA**, Woodall Street, Bloxwich, Walsall WS3 3JR Tel 01922 498000. Open 9am - 6pm
- **ASDA**, St Lawrence Way, Darlaston WS10 8UZ Tel 0121 568 4010. Open 9am - 6pm
- **BOOTS**, Unit A, 58 Park Street, Walsall WS1 1NG Tel 01922 621555. Open 8.30am - 4.30pm

OPEN NEW YEAR'S DAY: 1 JANUARY

- **PLECK PHARMACY**, 246A Wednesbury Road WS2 9QN Tel 01922 646555. Open 10am - 6pm
- **ASDA**, 42 George Street, Walsall WS1 1RS Tel 01922 704130. Open 10am - 4pm
- **ASDA**, Woodall Street, Bloxwich, Walsall WS3 3JR Tel 01922 498000. Open 10am - 4pm
- **ASDA**, St Lawrence Way, Darlaston WS10 8UZ Tel 0121 568 4010. Open 10am - 4pm
- **BOOTS**, Unit A, 58 Park Street, Walsall WS1 1NG Tel 01922 621555. Open 10.30am - 4.30pm
- **BOOTS**, 3 Stafford Street, Willenhall WV13 1TQ Tel 01902 605255. Open 10.30am - 4.30pm

CHRISTMAS TV

Matt Smith's last stand as the Doctor

Downton Christmas special

Danny Dyer joins EastEnders

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CHRISTMAS EVE

Karl (Elvis Tribute)

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Take in a top West End show and have some free time in London for shopping and sightseeing. For the Dine and Dance option see the matinee performance before heading back to the hotel for dinner and disco (conditions apply). For the Saturday Night option see the evening performance.

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Christmas Eve

BBC 1



**Edward is forced to
make a confession in
Holby City, 8.00pm**

6.00 Breakfast 9.00 The Gruffalo (R) 9.30 A CBeebies Christmas Carol Adaptation of the Charles Dickens novel. 10.10 Sarah & Duck: Christmas Special 10.20 FILM: The Santa Clause 3: The Escape Clause (2006) Christmas fantasy comedy sequel, starring Tim Allen. *** 11.45 Only Fools and Horses Part two of two. The Trotters arrive in America. (R) 1.10 BBC News 1.20 Regional News; Weather. 1.30 FILM: The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe (2005) Four children discover a secret entrance to a mystical land that an evil witch has cursed with perpetual winter. Fantasy adventure, starring Tilda Swinton and Georgie Henley. ***

BBC 2



**Jo Brand Phill Jupitus
and Brendan O'Carroll
feature in QI XL, 9.00pm**

6.00 This Is BBC 2 6.50 Natural World: Animal House (R) 7.50 FILM: Herbie Rides Again (1974) Disney comedy sequel, starring Helen Hayes. *** 9.15 Westminster Abbey The choir prepares to sing at a papal Mass in St Peter's Basilica, Rome. (R) 10.15 FILM: An American in Paris (1951) Romantic musical, starring Gene Kelly and Leslie Caron. *** 12.05 FILM: Splash! (1984) Romantic fantasy comedy, with Tom Hanks and Daryl Hannah. *** 1.50 FILM: Guys and Dolls (1955) A gambler tries to win the heart of a Salvation Army member, while his friend searches for somewhere to hold an illegal dice game. Musical, with Frank Sinatra and Marlon Brando. ***

ITV



**Priya tells David to call
off the wedding in
Emmerdale, 7.00pm**

6.00 Daybreak 8.30 Lorraine 9.25 FILM: The Christmas Takeover (1998) A cold-hearted toy tycoon goes to the North Pole to drive Santa out of business, only to have a crisis of conscience. Comedy drama, starring Harry Hamlin and William Hootkins. *** 11.30 Catchphrase Revival of the game show, hosted by Stephen Mulhern. (R) 12.15 ITV News and Weather 12.30 Let's Do Christmas with Gino & Mel With singer Billy Ocean. Last in the series. 1.30 Steppin' Out with Katherine Jenkins A cabaret show with the classical singer and celebrity guests. (R) 2.45 Gary Barlow: Journey to Afghanistan The X Factor judge performs a concert for British troops at Camp Bastion. (R)

Ch4



**Chris O'Dowd, The IT
Crowd Special: The
Internet Is Coming, 9.00pm**

6.20 Wilde Stories Animated version of The Selfish Giant. (R) 6.50 Wilde Stories (R) 7.15 The Bear Animation based on the Raymond Briggs tale. (R) 7.45 FILM: The Nativity Story (2006) Biblical drama, starring Keisha Castle-Hughes. *** 9.45 The Big Bang Theory Army and Penny use Bernadette to spy on Leonard and Priya. (R) 10.15 The Big Bang Theory (R) 10.40 The Simpsons The family spends Christmas on a ranch. (R) 11.10 The Simpsons (R) 11.40 The Simpsons (R) 12.10 Deal or No Deal: Ideal Christmas Noel Edmonds hosts a festive-themed edition. 1.10 FILM: It's a Wonderful Life (1946) Fantasy drama, starring James Stewart. (b/w) ****

Ch5



**Ashley Maddocks, Eddie
Stobart: 12 Days of
Christmas, 8.00pm**

6.00 Milkshake! 10.00 Chinese Food in Minutes Oriental cooking. (R) 10.05 The Dog Rescuers A Grimspy inspector finds two puppies locked in a dirty bathroom. (R) 10.40 World's Strongest Man 2013: Qualifiers James Richardson presents action from the Giants Live Series event in Norway, which was the fourth qualifier for the World's Strongest Man heats. (R) 11.40 Eddie Stobart's Christmas Cracker The truckers deliver a consignment of reindeer for a Christmas parade. (R) 12.40 FILM: Clash of the Titans (1981) A hero of ancient Greece journeys into the underworld to save a princess from being sacrificed to a sea monster. Mythical adventure, starring Harry Hamlin and Laurence Olivier. ***

Early View

Prime Time

Late View

3.40 Toy Story 2 (1999) Animated sequel, with the voice of Tom Hanks. ****

5.10 Shrek the Halls Festive animated short, starring the lovable ogre. (R)

5.35 BBC News 5.50 Midlands Today; Weather.

5.55 Finding Nemo (2003) Animated adventure, with the voices of Albert Brooks and Ellen DeGeneres. ****

7.30 EastEnders A defiant David resists Janine's plea to drop his blackmail plan, and Joey is optimistic as Alice's hearing arrives. Alfie and Kat bid an emotional farewell to the Queen Vic.

8.00 Holby City Edward is forced to make a confession about Mary-Claire, Zosia is determined not to let her father back into her life, and Mo tries to pluck up the courage to ask Mr Thompson out.

9.00 Last Tango in Halifax Gillian worries about the fallout from her confession and Kate is rushed to hospital. Caroline's emotions are in turmoil as Celia and Alan's wedding day dawns. Last in the series.

10.00 Not Going Out Christmas Special Lee invites Lucy and her parents to join him and Daisy to spend Christmas in a cosy old country house that used to belong to his aunt – but they soon sense a spooky presence.

10.45 Outnumbered Christmas special from 2012. The Brockmans throw a party, but Karen is too busy chatting online. Jake has fallen in with a bad crowd and the less said about the guests the better. (R) National Lottery Update

11.30 BBC News; Weather.

11.45 Westminster Abbey: The First Eucharist of Christmas Live service from Westminster Abbey in London, led by the Very Rev John Hall. Carols include: O Come, All Ye Faithful, Hark! The Herald Angels Sing and O Little Town of Bethlehem.

1.05 FILM: Protocol (1984) Comedy, with Goldie Hawn and Chris Sarandon. *** 2.35 Weatherview 2.40 BBC News

4.15 Fantasia (1940) Premiere. Animated anthology, set to famous pieces of classical music. ****

6.15 Carols from King's Music and readings from the Chapel of King's College, Cambridge, including the carols Once in Royal David's City, O Little Town of Bethlehem and God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen.

7.30 The Perfect Morecambe & Wise Christmas Special A selection of classic clips from the duo's festive BBC specials, including Angela Rippon coming out from behind the news desk and Andre Previn being shown how to play Grieg.

8.00 Victoria Wood's Midlife Christmas A festive special from 2009 that attempts to cram a night's Christmas viewing into an hour. Highlights include the Midlife Olympics 2009, popular costume drama Lark Pies to Cranchesterford and the adventures of soap star Bo Beaumont. (R)

9.00 QI XL Stephen Fry hosts a festive edition of the comedy quiz, with Jo Brand, Phill Jupitus, Brendan O'Carroll and Alan Davies answering questions on the theme of Kris Kringle.

9.45 Mel Smith: I've Sort of Done Things A celebration of the life and career of the actor, writer and director, who died in July at the age of 60. With contributions by Griff Rhys Jones, John Lloyd and Richard Curtis.

10.45 Comedy Connections The story of how Mel Smith and Griff Rhys Jones collaborated to create one of the most successful and influential partnerships in comedy history. (R)

11.25 The Awakening (2011) An investigator of supernatural hoaxes has her sceptical beliefs challenged when she is summoned to a haunting at a boarding school. Horror, starring Rebecca Hall and Dominic West. ***

1.05 FILM: The Spiral Staircase (1945) Period thriller, starring Dorothy McGuire. (b/w) *** 2.30 This Is BBC 2

3.45 Fast Freddie, the Widow and Me Drama, starring Laurence Fox and Sarah Smart. (R)

5.15 The Nation's Favourite Christmas Song A countdown of the top 20 festive tunes. (R)

6.45 ITV News and Weather 7.00 Emmerdale Priya tells David she wants him to call off the wedding and be a proper family with her and the baby. Megan packs her bags to leave after Declan lashes out again.

7.30 You've Been Framed! At Christmas Harry Hill narrates a festive and comical selection of mishaps filmed by viewers, featuring a kid wrestling a Christmas tree and the world's most terrifying present.

8.00 Midsomer Murders New series. Return of the long-running detective drama, starring Neil Dudgeon. It's a time of joy and happiness in Midsomer for once – Christmas is coming, and DCI Barnaby and his wife Sarah (Fiona Dolman) are soon to become parents. But the festive mood changes when a man is stabbed to death with an antique sword during a ghost-hunting party at a spooky manor house in Morton Shallows. Is blacksmith's daughter Rose Wilton seeking revenge from beyond the grave, or will Barnaby and new sidekick DS Charlie Nelson (Gwilym Lee) find a more earthly motive behind the murder?

10.00 ITV News at Ten and Weather

10.15 Christmas Carols on ITV Aled Jones presents an evening of festive performances from St Michael the Archangel Church in the village of Kirkby Malham, North Yorkshire.

11.15 Couples Retreat (2009) Four couples sign up for relationship therapy on a tropical island, but the treatment only serves to drive them apart. Comedy, starring Vince Vaughn, Malin Akerman and Jon Favreau. ***

1.15 The Jeremy Kyle Show USA 2.00 ITV Nightscreen 5.05 The Jeremy Kyle Show (R)

3.50 The Grinch (2000) Fantasy comedy, starring Jim Carrey. ***

6.00 The Simpsons Featuring a parody of Michael Bay's Transformers. (R)

6.25 Hollyoaks Grace urges Trevor to push ahead with his malicious plans for Mercedes.

6.55 Channel 4 News 7.00 4thought.tv How Christmas is perceived by those who do not celebrate it.

7.05 Ice Age: A Mammoth Christmas Festive spin-off of the animated films. Sid the sloth tries to redeem himself after accidentally ruining one of Manny the mammoth's Christmas traditions. (R)

7.30 The Snowman and the Snowdog Animated sequel to classic festive tale The Snowman, in which a boy's snowman and snowdog magically come to life and take him on an adventure to the North Pole. (R)

8.05 Big Fat Gypsy Weddings: Carols and Caravans Following the Christmas celebrations of the travelling community, including an escape to the sun in Tenerife, a festive 18th birthday party and a spectacular winter wedding. (R)

9.00 The IT Crowd Special: The Internet Is Coming Roy and Jen's reputations are put at risk in the final episode when an incident involving spilt coffee and a homeless person ends up on the internet. Comedy, starring Chris O'Dowd. Part of The IT Crowd Night. (R)

10.00 The IT Crowd Manual Behind the scenes of the comedy.

11.05 The IT Crowd: The Fans' Favourite Episode A people's choice episode. (R)

11.35 The IT Crowd: The Writer's Favourite Episode Graham Linehan's favourite chapter for the gang. (R) 12.10 The Inbetweeners (R) 12.40 The Inbetweeners (R) 1.10 The Inbetweeners (R) 1.35 The Inbetweeners (R) 2.05 FILM: Idiocracy (2006) *** 3.25 90210 4.05 Suburgatory 4.30 Suburgatory 4.50 Suburgatory 5.15 A Place in the Sun: Winter Sun (R)

3.00 Dirty Rotten Scoundrels (1988) Comedy, starring Michael Caine and Steve Martin. ***

5.10 Scrooge – A Christmas Carol (1951) A hard-hearted skintiff is taught the error of his ways by a succession of spectral visitors. Adaptation of Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol, with Alastair Sim and Mervyn Johns. ****

7.00 Eddie Stobart: 12 Days of Christmas A compilation of the most memorable festive moments from the series following the haulage company, featuring workers battling the elements, the traffic and the Christmas rush. 5 News Update

8.00 The Muppets and Lady Gaga at Christmas The pop superstar joins forces with the furry gang of puppets for an entertainment extravaganza, performing seasonal favourites and her own hits. She sings duets with Kermit the Frog, musician Elton John, actor Joseph Gordon-Levitt and drag artist RuPaul, while Forgetting Sarah Marshall star Kristen Bell appears in a sketch alongside the Muppets and Lady Gaga. (R) 9 News at 9

9.10 Greatest Ever Christmas Movies Countdown of the best festive films, from White Christmas and It's a Wonderful Life to Bad Santa and Elf. Gremlins star Zach Galifianakis and Miracle on 34th Street's Mara Wilson talk about their experiences making their movies, while Aled Jones reveals that he hadn't even seen classic animation The Snowman until 10 years ago – despite having a hit in 1985 with a version of its famous song Walking in the Air. Featuring contributions by Ollie Locke, Stacey Solomon, Joe Swash and Eamonn Holmes.

12.05 Britain's Craziest Christmas Lights (R) 1.05 SuperCasino 3.05 Blackpool Lights 3.55 House Doctor (R) 4.20 House Doctor (R) 4.45 Great Artists (R) 5.10 Nick's Quest (R) 5.35 Wildlife SOS (R)

Christmas Day

BBC 1



Michael McIntyre's Showtime, from the O2 in London, 10.05pm

6.00 Breakfast Headlines and business news. 9.00 **The Gruffalo's Child** Animated sequel, with the voice of Robbie Coltrane. (R) 9.25 **The Madagascar Penguins in a Christmas Caper** (R) 9.40 **Old Jack's Boat: The Christmas Quest** Jack's search for three Christmas gifts. 10.00 **Christmas Day: Live from Westminster Abbey** Traditional morning service. 11.00 **FILM: Chicken Run** (2000) Animated comedy, with the voices of Mel Gibson and Julia Sawalha. *** 12.20 **BBC News: Weather**. 12.30 **FILM: The Princess and the Frog** (2009) Disney animated musical fantasy, with the voice of Anika Noni Rose. *** 2.00 **Top of the Pops Christmas** The year's most successful chart acts.

BBC 2



Actor Mark Gatiss presents MR James: Ghost Writer, 10.05pm

6.00 **This Is BBC 2** 6.20 **Natural World: The Real Jungle Book** Bear India's sloth bear, the inspiration for The Jungle Book's Baloo. (R) 7.20 **FILM: Herbie Goes Bananas** (1980) Disney adventure, starring Cloris Leachman. *** 8.50 **FILM: The Red Shoes** (1948) Oscar-winning drama, with Moira Shearer. **** 11.00 **Carols from King's** Music and readings from the Chapel of King's College, Cambridge. (R) 12.15 **Music of the Monarchy** with David Starkey A selection of full-length royal classics. 1.20 **Swingin' Christmas** Festive music by the John Wilson Orchestra. (R) 2.45 **The Perfect Morescambe & Wise Christmas Special** A selection of classic clips from the duo's festive BBC specials. (R)

ITV



Nick flies into a rage and slaps Leanne in Coronation Street, 7.30pm

6.00 **CITY: Babar and the Adventures of Badou**. (R) 6.10 **Dino Dan** (R) 6.25 **Dino Dan** (R) 6.40 **Sooty** (R) 6.50 **Bookaboo** (R) 7.05 **Horrid Henry** (R) 7.20 **Almost Naked Animals** (R) 7.40 **Almost Naked Animals** (R) 7.55 **Bottom Knockers** Street 8.10 **Bottom Knockers** Street 8.25 **Dinner Date** (R) 9.25 **FILM: Santa Claus: The Movie** (1985) Family fantasy adventure, starring Dudley Moore. *** 11.25 **The Chase: Celebrity Special** (R) 12.30 **The Big Christmas Reunion** (R) 1.30 **You've Been Framed!** At Christmas (R) 2.00 **River Deep Mountain High: James Nesbitt in New Zealand** James Nesbitt travels from the tip of the North Island down to the South.

CH4



David Dickinson, Alan Carr: Chatty Man Christmas Special, 9.30pm

6.10 **Ivor the Invisible** (R) 6.35 **Prep & Landing** (R) 7.00 **Famous Fred** (R) 7.25 **Little Wolf's Book of Badness** (R) 7.55 **Olive, the Other Reindeer** (R) 8.50 **FILM: James and the Giant Peach** (1996) *** 10.25 **FILM: Horton Hears a Who!** (2008) *** 12.05 **The Big Bang Theory** Bernadette receives her PhD. (R) 12.35 **The Big Bang Theory** Sheldon re-evaluates the time he spends with Amy. 1.05 **The Simpsons** Homer plays Santa. (R) 1.40 **The Snowman** Animated adventure, based on Raymond Briggs' festive tale. (R) 2.10 **The Snowman and the Snowdog** Animated sequel to classic festive tale The Snowman. (R) 2.45 **The Simpsons** Bart destroys the family's Christmas presents. (R)

CH5



Noddy Holder narrates Britain's Craziest Christmas Lights, 7.30pm

6.00 **Milkshake!** 8.05 **FILM: Scrooge** (1970) A miserly man is taught the error of his ways by a host of spectral visitors. Musical adaptation of Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol, starring Albert Finney and Alec Guinness. *** 10.15 **FILM: Gone with the Wind** (1939) A plantation heiress has a tumultuous relationship with a roguish Southern gentleman during the American Civil War. Epic romantic drama, starring Vivien Leigh and Clark Gable. **** 2.35 **FILM: Casablanca** (1942) The owner of a Moroccan nightclub is reunited with an old flame who needs his help to escape the country. Romantic drama, starring Humphrey Bogart, Ingrid Bergman and Claude Rains. (b/w) ***

Early View

Prime Time

Late View

3.00 **The Queen**
3.10 **BBC News: Weather**.
3.20 **Toy Story 3** (2010) Premiere. Animated adventure, with the voices of Tom Hanks and Tim Allen. ***
5.00 **Strictly Come Dancing Christmas Special** Six Strictly newcomers compete.
6.15 **Call the Midwife: Christmas Special** Preparations for Shalegh's wedding are rudely interrupted by the discovery of an unexploded bomb, forcing the residents to pull together as they are evacuated to safety.
7.30 **Doctor Who** Matt Smith makes his final appearance as the Doctor, who joins some of the universe's deadliest alien species drawn to a mysterious message emanating from a backwater planet.
8.30 **EastEnders** Bianca is put out when Nikki arrives at her house on Christmas Day, while David and Carol get closer - but Janine looks set to ruin things.
9.30 **Mrs Brown's Boys Christmas Special** The first of two festive editions. Mrs Brown tries to find out what her grandson wants for Christmas and loses her temper at the family games night when no one plays by her rules.
10.05 **Michael McIntyre's Showtime** Stand-up comedy performed at the O2 in London during his 10-night run in 2012, featuring stories about a horrific trip to the dentist and watching his wife get undressed.
11.05 **BBC News: Weather**.
11.20 **On Christmas Night** Actor Patrice Naiambana reads from the Gospel of St Matthew, followed by the Sussex Carol performed by the Choir of King's College, Cambridge.
11.25 **The Vicar of Dibley** The villagers celebrate Christmas, and vicar Geraldine learns there is a heavy price to be paid for festive kindness when she agrees to attend three slap-up lunches. (R) National Lottery Update
12.10 **Would I Lie to You?** At Christmas (R) 12.40 **FILM: Anchorman: The Legend of Ron Burgundy** (2004) *** 2.15 **Weatherview** 2.20 **BBC News**

3.15 **Doctor Who at the Proms** Highlights of the 2013 concert featuring music from the sci-fi series. (R)
4.30 **An Adventure in Space and Time** Drama about the creation of Doctor Who, starring David Bradley. (R)
6.00 **Sign Zone: The Queen** Her Majesty's annual address to the nation and the Commonwealth. (R)
6.10 **Matthew Bourne's Sleeping Beauty** A performance of Tchaikovsky's ballet by the New Adventures dance company, reimagined by Matthew Bourne as a supernatural love story featuring vampires, fairies and gothic opulence.
7.40 **Christmas Night with the Two Ronnies** The comedy duo perform songs and sketches in a Christmas special from 1987, featuring a guest appearance by Charlton Heston and music by Elton John. (R)
8.30 **Morescambe & Wise: Leading Ladies** Penelope Keith presents a compilation of highlights from the comedy duo's shows featuring appearances by female stars of stage and screen.
9.30 **The Tractate Middoth** Terrifying spirits are summoned to a library after two men search for an obscure Hebrew text. Mark Gatiss's adaptation of MR James's tale, starring Sacha Dhawan and John Castle.
10.05 **MR James: Ghost Writer** Actor and writer Mark Gatiss examines the life and career of author MR James, attempting to uncover the inspirations behind his stories of the supernatural.
11.05 **QI** XL Stephen Fry presents a festive special from 2010, as Daniel Radcliffe, Graham Norton, Lee Mack and regular Alan Davies answer questions on the theme of hocus pocus. (R)
11.50 **Hebburn** Sarah flies in to Hebburn for Christmas from Switzerland with Jack, and her parents and miserable grandmother head up north too. Last in the series. (R)
12.20 **FILM: Dead Poets Society** (1989) *** 2.25 **This Is BBC 2**

3.00 **The Queen Her Majesty's** annual address.
3.10 **ITV News and Weather**
3.20 **Tangled** (2010) Disney animated comedy, with the voice of Mandy Moore. ***
5.15 **Paul O'Grady: For the Love of Dogs at Christmas** The comedian helps out at Battersea Dogs & Cats Home over the festive period.
6.15 **Emmerdale** Hour-long episode. Alicia and David's wedding day arrives and everything seems to be going wrong, while Charity catches a drunken Declan pouring petrol around his house.
7.15 **ITV News and Weather**
7.30 **Coronation Street** Hour-long episode. Nick flies into a rage and slaps Leanne, Roy's hopes for a quiet Christmas with Hayley are dashed, and Carla makes Peter an equal partner in Underworld.
8.30 **Downton Abbey** It's summer and as part of Rose's debutante 'coming out' she is to be presented at Buckingham Palace. The family is in London, preparing Grantham House for the busy social programme, and Martha Levinson, not one to miss such a grand occasion, arrives from New York with Cora's recently disgraced brother Harold (Sideways star Paul Giamatti). Both outspoken and larger than life, they make quite an impression on certain members of high society. Meanwhile, when the Crawleys are implicated in a scandal that threatens to engulf the monarchy, Robert goes to great lengths to protect the royal family - and his own. Last in the series.
10.30 **ITV News and Weather**
10.45 **Love Actually** (2003) Interlinked tales of several people in search of love. Richard Curtis's romantic comedy, with Hugh Grant, Martine McCutcheon, Emma Thompson, Colin Firth, Bill Nighy and Liam Neeson. ***
1.10 **Christmas Carols on ITV** (R) 2.10 **FILM: Closing the Ring** (2007) Drama, starring Shirley MaLaine. *** 4.05 **ITV Nightscreen**

3.15 **Deal or No Deal: Ideal Christmas** Noel Edmonds hosts a festive-themed edition.
4.15 **The Alternative Christmas Message** Another famous face delivers an alternative to the Queen's speech.
4.20 **Channel 4 News**
4.30 **4thought.tv** How Christmas is perceived by those who do not celebrate it.
4.35 **The Muppet Christmas Carol** (1992) Puppet comedy, starring Michael Caine. ***
6.15 **Home Alone 2: Lost in New York** (1992) A boy ends up stranded in the Big Apple - where he bumps into two familiar burglars with an axe to grind. Comedy sequel, starring Macaulay Culkin, Joe Pesci and Daniel Stern. ***
8.30 **Bear's Wild Weekend with Stephen Fry** Bear Grylls takes the QI host on an expedition to the Italian Dolomites, setting him a series of challenges, from travelling on the skids of a helicopter to descending a waterfall.
9.30 **Alan Carr: Chatty Man Christmas Special** The comedian hosts a show filled with festive fun and frolics, joined by Russell Brand, Davina McCall and David Dickinson. Little Mix perform their new single. Last in the series.
10.35 **Man Down Christmas Special** Scrooge 3000 - a festive school play set in space - and a terrifying yuletide tradition are just two of the Christmas challenges that risk reducing Dan's life to a crumbling mess.
11.05 **Father Ted Christmas Special** Father Ted and Dougal endure their worst Christmas ever when they get lost in a lingerie department, leaving them in a highly embarrassing predicament. Festive edition from 1996. (R)
12.15 **Father Ted** (R) 12.50 **Father Ted** (R) 1.20 **Father Ted** (R) 1.45 **Father Ted** (R) 2.15 **Father Ted** (R) 2.40 **Father Ted** (R) 3.05 **FILM: A Matter of Life and Death** (1946) *** 4.50 90210 5.30 **Suburgatory** 5.55 **Prep & Landing: Naughty v Nice** (R)

4.40 **Greatest Ever Christmas Movies** Countdown of the best festive films, from It's a Wonderful Life to Bad Santa. Featuring contributions by Gremlins star Zach Galligan and Miracle on 34th Street's Mara Wilson. (R)
7.30 **Britain's Craziest Christmas Lights** Former Slade frontman Noddy Holder narrates a documentary following four households as they turn their homes into electric winter wonderlands with extensive displays of festive illuminations. For these Christmas obsessives, who include Dave and Carol Edwards, putting up the lights involves a head for heights, DIY wiring skills and an unshakable resolve, with some inspired by the bling of Blackpool while others aim for the ambitious scale of a West End show. (R)
8.30 **Eddie Stobart: 12 Days of Christmas** A compilation of the most memorable festive moments from the series following the day-to-day work of the haulage company that has road, rail and air divisions. The programme features 12 of the best tales of the firm's employees as they battle the elements, the traffic and the crazy Christmas rush to make sure their deliveries are on time. (R)
9.30 **Michael Jackson's This Is It** (2009) Premiere. Documentary following the singer rehearsing for his planned 50 shows at London's O2, before his death in June 2009. Featuring interviews with Jackson and performances of classic hits including Billy Jean and Wanna Be Startin' Something. ***
11.40 **Greatest Christmas TV Moments** Countdown of 50 festive TV highlights, featuring Gavin & Stacey, Morescambe and Wise, Only Fools and Horses, Wallace and Gromit, Doctor Who, Top of the Pops and The Royle Family. (R)
2.35 **SuperCasino** 3.55 **House Doctor** (R) 4.20 **House Doctor** (R) 4.45 **Great Artists** (R) 5.10 **Nick's Quest** (R) 5.35 **Wildlife SOS** (R)

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Boxing Day

BBC 1



Landlord Mick makes his presence felt in EastEnders, 7.15pm

6.00 Breakfast Headlines and business news. **9.00** Room on the Broom (R) 9.25 Mouse and Mole at Christmas Time Snowmole takes Mouse to a land where all of his wishes come true. **9.55** FILM: **101 Dalmatians** (1996) Disney comedy adventure remake, starring Glenn Close. **11.30** FILM: **Flushed Away** (2006) Animated adventure, featuring the voice of Hugh Jackman. **12.50** BBC News. **1.00** Regional News; Weather. **1.05** FILM: **Wallace & Gromit in The Curse of the Were-Rabbit** (2005) Oscar-winning animated adventure, with the voice of Peter Sallis. **2.25** FILM: **Alice in Wonderland** (2010) Fantasy adventure, starring Mia Wasikowska. **3.30**

BBC 2



Ben Fogle, Ben & James Versus the Arabian Desert on at 9.15pm

6.00 This Is BBC 2 Preview of upcoming programmes. **6.05** Natural World The devastating power of the African driver ant. (R) **6.50** FILM: **Herbie Goes to Monte Carlo** (1977) Disney comedy adventure sequel, starring Dean Jones. **8.35** Westminster Abbey The new intake of pupils talk about their lives at the choir school. Last in the series. (R) **9.35** Earthflight Bird's-eye view of the natural world. (R) **10.35** **Pride & Prejudice: Having a Ball** A team of experts recreates a Regency ball. (R) **12.05** FILM: **Emma** (1996) Jane Austen drama, starring Gwyneth Paltrow and Ewan McGregor. **2.00** Operation Snow Tiger Part one of two. Scientists studying endangered Siberian tigers. (R)

ITV



Keith Lemon hosts Through the Christmas Keyhole, 11.20pm

6.00 CITY: Babar and the Adventures of Badou. (R) **6.10** Dino Dan (R) **6.25** Dino Dan (R) **6.40** Sooty (R) **6.50** Bookaboo **7.05** Horrid Henry (R) **7.20** Almost Naked Animals (R) **7.40** Almost Naked Animals (R) **7.55** Bottom Knockers Street **8.10** Bottom Knockers Street **8.25** Dinner Date David from Essex chooses three blind dates from five potential partners. Narrated by Charlotte Hudson. **9.25** FILM: **Problem Child** (1990) Comedy, starring John Ritter. **11.00** FILM: **The Flintstones** (1994) Live-action version of the cartoon comedy, with John Goodman. **11.45** ITV News and Weather **12.05** FILM: **Casper** (1995) Family comedy, starring Christina Ricci. **3.30**

CH4



Come Dine with Me: Comedians Christmas Special, 4.35pm

6.15 FILM: **Mysterious Island** (1961) Sci-fi adventure, starring Michael Craig. **8.00** Morning Line A look ahead to today's meeting at Kempton Park. **9.00** Frasier Part two of two. Niles is suspected of being an accomplice to murder. (R) **9.30** Frasier Liath and Frasier are set up on a blind date. (R) **10.00** The Big Bang Theory Howard gets caught in a strange argument. (R) **10.30** FILM: **The King and I** (1956) Oscar-winning musical, starring Yul Brynner and Deborah Kerr. **1.05** Channel 4 Racing Clare Balding and Nick Luck present live coverage of five races from Kempton Park and Wetherby, including the 3.10 King George VI Chase.

CH5



Laurence Shahlaei, World's Strongest Man 2013 on at 8.15pm

6.00 Milkshake! **9.45** World's Strongest Man 2013: Qualifiers (R) **10.45** Eddie Stobart: 12 Days of Christmas The haulage company's most memorable festive moments. (R) **11.45** World's Most Pampered Pets Documentary about people who spoil their pets. **12.45** FILM: **High Society** (1956) Complications arise when a playboy composer tries to stop his ex-wife from marrying another man. Romantic musical comedy, starring Bing Crosby and Frank Sinatra. **2.55** FILM: **Meet Me in St Louis** (1944) A close-knit family is worried that a prospective move to New York will mean missing out on the 1904 World's Fair. Musical, starring Judy Garland, Tom Drake and Margaret O'Brien. **3.30**

Early View

4.05 Cars 2 (2011) Premiere. Animated adventure sequel, with the voice of Owen Wilson. **5.45** BBC News **6.00** Midlands Today; Weather.

6.05 Gangsta Granny Family comedy based on David Williams' book about a law-breaking OAP who takes her bored grandson on a crime spree. Julia McKenzie, Joanna Lumley and Rob Brydon star.

7.15 EastEnders Phil is in for a surprise when new Vic landlord Mick makes his presence felt. Max finds Lauren and Jake together and Joey gets bad news from the prison.

7.45 Still Open All Hours David Jason returns as Granville in this one-off special of Roy Clarke's popular comedy, now running the shop with his son after inheriting the business from Arkwright.

8.15 Death Comes to Pemberley New series. Anna Maxwell Martin, Matthew Rhys and Jenna Coleman star in this sequel to Pride and Prejudice, adapted from the best-selling novel by PD James, which brings Jane Austen's world back to life in a highly original way - with a murder mystery plot at its centre. Continues tomorrow.

9.20 Len Goodman's Perfect Christmas Strictly Come Dancing judge Len Goodman takes a trip through the TV archives, choosing a series of small-screen clips to demonstrate his idea of the perfect Christmas Day.

10.00 BBC News **10.15** Regional News; Weather.

10.25 Match of the Day Gary Lineker introduces highlights of the latest Premier League matches, including Manchester City v Liverpool and Hull City v Manchester United.

11.55 Have I Got a Bit More 2013: News for You Extended highlights from this year's editions, revisiting how Paul Merton, Ian Hislop and a variety of guests took on the big news stories of 2013. Last in the series.

12.40 Skiing Weatherview **12.45** BBC News

Prime Time

Late View

3.00 Operation Snow Tiger Part two of two. Liz Bonnin searches for a tiger that has gone missing. (R)

4.00 Final Score A round-up of this afternoon's football results.

5.15 You Have Been Watching - David Croft A tribute to the TV comedy writer. (R)

6.15 Dad's Army (1971) The Home Guard soldiers are put on their mettle as they get ready to capture three German aviators. British comedy based on the TV series, starring Arthur Lowe and John Le Mesurier. **3.30**

7.45 Christmas University Challenge Alumni from the colleges of Gonville & Caius, Cambridge, and Christ Church, Oxford, compete, with Andrew Graham-Dixon and Michael Dobbs among the contestants.

8.15 Idris Elba - King of Speed Part one of two. Documentary in which the Luther star embarks on an international journey to explore the history of car racing while sampling the thrill of competition vehicles.

9.15 Ben & James Versus the Arabian Desert Part one of two. Four years after On Thin Ice - their Antarctic expedition for BBC Two - James Cracknell and Ben Fogle reunite to attempt an unguided crossing of a portion of the Rub' al Khali desert - also known as the Empty Quarter. The duo are following in the footsteps of British explorer Wilfred Thesiger, who travelled extensively in the region between 1945 and 1949 and earned the nickname of Mubarak bin London from the Bedouin tribes.

10.15 King Arthur (2004) A Roman commander in fifth-century Britain comes to realise his true destiny is to lead the people against Saxon invaders. Adventure, starring Clive Owen and Keira Knightley. **3.30**

12.10 FILM: **Dracula** (1958) Hammer horror, starring Christopher Lee. **1.30** FILM: **Sign Zone: Jane Eyre** (2011) Period drama, starring Mia Wasikowska. **3.30** This Is BBC 2

3.00 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 1 - Behind the Magic Ben Shephard interviews the stars of the film. (R)

4.00 Off Their Rockers A pensioner's wheelchair is stolen. Last in the series. (R)

4.30 The Nation's Favourite Elvis Song A countdown of the King's 20 greatest hits, as voted for by the public, featuring contributions by stars he influenced and an interview with his ex-wife Priscilla Presley. (R)

6.00 ITV News and Weather

6.15 Emmerdale Hour-long episode. At Home Farm, the fire is raging and Charity tries to get Declan to leave. Eventually, they flee the grounds, but Megan rushes inside - and becomes trapped.

7.15 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 1 (2010) Premiere. The dark lord Voldemort rises to ultimate power over the magical world, so the teenage wizard and his friends set out on a mission to find the magical horcruxes - artefacts containing parts of the evil wizard's soul that hold the key to destroying him. The first half of the two-part conclusion to the fantasy saga, starring Daniel Radcliffe, Ralph Fiennes, Emma Watson and Rupert Grint. **3.30**

10.05 Am Britney Jean: Britney Spears in Las Vegas Documentary following the pop star as she prepares for her performance residency in Las Vegas, revealing how she handles the pressures that come with the next chapter of her career.

11.05 ITV News and Weather **11.20** Through the Christmas Keyhole Keith Lemon returns with a festive rummage through the homes of three mystery celebrities, challenging regular panellist Dave Berry and guests to guess their identities. (R)

12.20 FILM: **The Affair of the Necklace** (2001) Period drama, starring Hilary Swank. **2.20** FILM: **Inland Empire** (2006) Mystery drama, starring Laura Dern. **3.30** 5.20 ITV Nightscreen

3.35 Deal or No Deal: Ideal Christmas Noel Edmonds hosts a festive-themed edition.

4.35 Come Dine with Me: Comedians Christmas Special Sean Hughes, Gina Yashere, Paul Tonkinson and Duncan Norville compete. (R)

5.35 Hollyoaks The Roscoes have more than one reason to celebrate as Christmas Day arrives. Fraser worries when Grace goes missing, and plans are put into action to steal Mercedes' new fortune.

6.05 Channel 4 News

6.15 4thought.tv How Christmas is perceived by those who do not celebrate it.

6.20 Independence Day (1996) A fleet of huge flying saucers launches a devastating and unprovoked attack on Earth. As survivors try to flee the seemingly unstoppable alien invaders, the courageous US president, an ace pilot and a computer genius come up with a plan to take the fight to the enemy and save the human race. Roland Emmerich's sci-fi adventure, starring Will Smith, Bill Pullman, Jeff Goldblum, Mary McDonnell, Randy Quaid and Harry Connick Jr. **3.30**

9.00 Big Fat Quiz of the Year 2013 Jimmy Carr poses questions about the major events of the year to Jack Whitehall, Jonathan Ross, Dara O Briain, Kristen Schaal, Noel Fielding and Richard Ayoade.

11.05 Alan Carr: Chatty Man Christmas Special The comedian hosts a show filled with festive fun and frolics, joined by actor and comedian Russell Brand, presenters Davina McCall and David Dickinson, and girl group Little Mix, who perform their new single Little Mix. Last in the series. (R)

12.10 FILM: **Machete** (2010) Action thriller, starring Danny Trejo. **2.00** FILM: **Legend** (1985) Fantasy adventure, with Tom Cruise. **3.35** A Place in the Sun: Winter Sun (R) **4.35** Secret Removers **5.30** Suburgatory **5.55** Suburgatory

5.15 The Wizard of Oz (1939) A tornado whisks a girl off to a magical land where she embarks on a journey in search of the wizard who knows the way home. Musical fantasy, with Judy Garland and Ray Bolger. **3.30**

7.15 Michael Buble's Christmas Special The Grammy-winning Canadian crooner performs classic festive songs in his third annual Christmas special, with soul and R'n'B singer Mary J Blige joining him on numbers including Run, Run Rudolph.

8.15 World's Strongest Man 2013 James Richardson presents action from the opening heat from Hailiang Bay in Sanya, China, where the top two of six competitors would progress to the final. Britain's Strongest Man Laurence Shahlaei was among those involved, along with American duo Robert Oberst and Nick Best, with disciplines including the Truck Pull and the Atlas Stones.

9.15 Britain's Favourite Christmas Songs A countdown of popular songs that are guaranteed to make any Christmas party go with a swing. Highlights include the Jackson 5's Santa Claus Is Coming to Town, Greg Lake's I Believe in Father Christmas, the Waitresses' Christmas Wrapping and the Pogues and Kirsty MacColl's Fairytale of New York. Is Mud's Lonely Christmas past its sell-by date? Will Jona Lewie ever Stop the Cavalry? And where would any Christmas party be without Slade and their classic anthem Merry Xmas Everybody? But which one will top the nation's festive chart? Featuring contributions by artists, producers, video directors, composers and journalists, who shed light on the creation of the songs and their accompanying videos. (R)

12.10 Michael Buble's Christmas Special (R) **1.10** SuperCinema **3.05** Blackpool Lights **3.55** House Doctor (R) **4.20** House Doctor (R) **4.45** Great Artists (R) **5.10** Nick's Quest (R) **5.35** Wildlife SOS (R)

Friday 27 December

BBC 1



Mick lets Shirley and Tina move into the Vic in EastEnders, 8.00pm

6.00 Breakfast 8.20 Match of the Day (R) 9.50 FILM: 102 Dalmatians (2000) Disney family adventure sequel, starring Glenn Close. ★★ 11.25 FILM: Bedtime Stories (2008) Fantasy comedy, starring Adam Sandler. ★★ 1.00 BBC News: Weather. 1.15 Regional All Stars: Weather. 1.25 Open All Hours: A Celebration The enduring appeal of the classic comedy. 1.55 Len Goodman's Perfect Christmas Festive TV clips chosen by the Strictly judge. (R) 2.35 FILM: Enchanted (2007) A fairy-tale princess is magically transported from her cartoon world to modern-day New York. Part-animated fantasy comedy, starring Amy Adams, James Marsden and Susan Sarandon. ★★

BBC 2



David Attenborough explores the continent's wildlife in Africa, 9.30am

6.00 This Is BBC 2 6.30 Natural World: Tiger Dynasty (R) 7.30 Sign Zone: Great Continental Railway Journeys (R) 8.30 Sign Zone: Africa 2013: Countdown to the Rains The rains finally arrive and the grazing animals spread out across the valley. Last in the series. (R) 9.30 Africa David Attenborough explores the continent's wildlife and landscape. (R) 10.30 Earthflight (R) 11.30 FILM: War and Peace (1956) Historical drama, starring Audrey Hepburn. ★★ 2.50 FILM: How the West Was Won (1962) Three generations of a pioneer family experience many ordeals as they try to build a life for themselves on the American frontier. Epic Western, starring James Stewart and John Wayne. ★★

ITV



Harry Hill narrates You've Been Framed! shown at 8.00pm

6.00 CITY: Babar and the Adventures of Badou. (R) 6.10 Dino Dan (R) 6.25 Dino Dan (R) 6.40 Scooby (R) 6.50 Bookaboo 7.05 Horrid Henry. (R) 7.20 Almost Naked Animals (R) 7.40 Almost Naked Animals (R) 7.55 Bottom Kicker Street 8.10 Bottom Kicker Street 8.25 Dinner Date Russell from Essex takes part in the dating show. (R) 9.25 Murder, She Wrote A ventriloquist is accused of murder. (R) 10.25 Dickinson's Real Deal (R) 11.25 FILM: Batteries Not Included (1987) Sci-fi fantasy, starring Jessica Hahn. ★★ 1.25 ITV News and Weather 1.35 ITV News Central; Weather. 1.40 FILM: Step Up (2006) Musical romance, with Channing Tatum and Jenna Dewan. ★★

Ch4



Noel Edmonds hosts Deal or No Deal: Ideal Christmas, 3.15pm

6.15 Suburgatory 6.40 According to Jim (R) 7.05 According to Jim (R) 7.30 Will & Grace (R) 7.55 Will & Grace (R) 8.20 FILM: A Turtle's Tale: Sammy's Adventures (2010) Premiere. Animated adventure, with the voice of Dominic Cooper. ★★ 10.00 The Big Bang Theory Penny considers breaking up with Leonard. (R) 10.30 The Big Bang Theory Sheldon hires an attractive female assistant. (R) 10.55 The Simpsons Homer wakes up to find his family missing. (R) 11.25 The Simpsons Mayor Quimby brings election day forward. (R) 11.55 FILM: Aliens in the Attic (2009) Children's sci-fi comedy, starring Carter Jenkins. ★★ 1.35 FILM: Dr Dolittle (1998) Comedy, starring Eddie Murphy. ★★

Ch5



The hapless hero bags a bargain in Do It Yourself Mr Bean, 9.30pm

6.00 Milkshake! 10.00 World's Strongest Man 2013 The opening heat from Hailang Bay in Sanya, China. (R) 11.00 Eddie Stobart's Christmas Cracker The truckers deliver a consignment of reindeer for a Christmas parade. (R) 12.00 FILM: 633 Squadron (1964) RAF pilots are sent to bomb a German rocket-fuel plant, but the capture of a resistance fighter threatens the plan. Second World War drama, with Cliff Robertson and George Chakiris. ★★ 1.50 FILM: Zulu Dawn (1979) Fact-based historical drama, charting events leading to the massacre of more than 1,500 British soldiers at Isandlwana. Prequel to Zulu, starring Burt Lancaster and Peter O'Toole. Edited for violence and language. ★★

Early View

Prime Time

Late View

4.10 Megamind (2010) Premiere. Animated superhero comedy, with the voice of Will Ferrell. ★★

5.40 BBC News; Weather. 5.55 Midlands Today; Weather.

6.05 Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull (2008) The globe-trotting archaeologist races against Soviet agents to find a mysterious artefact of untold power. Action adventure sequel, starring Harrison Ford and Cate Blanchett. ★★

8.00 EastEnders Linda is livid with Mick for letting his sisters move into the Vic, and bonds with Sharon over their mutual dislike of Shirley. Peter finds the money Cindy stole from Phil.

8.30 Miranda The shop owner's friends accuse her of being immature so she sets out to prove them wrong – first by looking after a toddler, then by hosting a grown-up dinner party. (R)

9.00 Death Comes to Pemberley Darcy retreats into a version of his younger self as the fallout from Wickham's arrest threatens his marriage, and Louisa Bidwell's unforeseen revelation adds to his wife's anxiety. Concludes tomorrow.

10.00 BBC News; Weather; National Lottery Update

10.20 Mrs Brown's Boys Christmas Special The first of two festive editions. Mrs Brown tries to find out what her grandson wants for Christmas and loses her temper at the family games night when no one plays by her rules. (R)

11.00 Not Going Out Christmas Special Lee and the gang spend Christmas in a spooky country house. (R)

11.45 John Bishop's Christmas Show Festive giggles featuring Jason Manford, Nina Conti, David O'Doherty and Tim Vine. (R)

12.45 FILM: The Lonely Guy (1984) Comedy, with Steve Martin and Charles Grodin. ★★ 2.10 Weatherview 2.15 BBC News

5.15 Flog It! From National Museum Cardiff. (R)

6.00 Celebrity Eggheads Derek Jacobi, Frances Barber, Neil Dudgeon, Fiona Laird and Emma Fielding take on the general-knowledge champions. Hosted by Dermot Murnaghan. (R)

6.30 The Choir: Sing While You Work The three remaining choirs face their biggest challenge as they perform a song composed by Paul Mealer at Ely Cathedral, before one is picked as the winner. Last in the series. (R)

7.30 Christmas University Challenge Distinguished graduates of St Hugh's College, Oxford, compete with those of the University of Stirling, with Suzy Klein and Paul Lewis among the contestants.

8.00 Idris Elba – King of Speed Part two of two. The Luther star examines the importance of precision driving skills in motorsports, learning the art of rallying from former world champion Ari Vatanen.

9.00 Ben & James Versus the Arabian Desert Part two of two. James Cracknell and Ben Fogle continue their expedition across the Arabian Desert. As they try to pick up the pace, disaster strikes when one of them suffers a serious injury, leading to further delays – although it does allow them to reflect on their friendship.

10.00 Cast Away (2000) A manager for a courier service has to fend for himself when a plane crash leaves him stranded alone on a desert island. Initially panic-stricken, he overcomes his terror to survive for four years on his own before building a raft and setting off on an epic journey back home. Adventure drama, starring Tom Hanks, Helen Hunt, Nick Searcy, Lori White and Chris Noth. ★★

12.15 Ambassadors (R) 1.15 FILM: The Mummy (1999) Hammer horror, starring Peter Cushing and Christopher Lee. ★★ 2.40 Sign Zone: Imagine – Who's Afraid of Machiavelli? (R) 3.40 Sign Zone: Waiting for Gaga: A Culture Show Special (R) 4.40 This Is BBC 2

3.45 The Chase With Lorraine Kelly, Craig Charles, Jamelia and Don Joly.

4.45 Downton Abbey The Crawleys are implicated in a scandal that threatens to engulf the royal family. Last in the series. (R)

6.35 ITV News Central; Weather.

6.45 ITV News and Weather 7.00 Emmerdale Robbie becomes suspicious of Charity and Declan at the hospital, so she returns to Home Farm planning to delete the CCTV footage, but what she views gives her food for thought.

7.30 Coronation Street Hayley waits nervously for the results of her scan, Nick admits to causing Leanne's black eye, and Maddie owns up to the theft of Sally's handbag.

8.00 You've Been Framed! Harry Hill narrates a comical selection of mishaps filmed by viewers, featuring everything from cute kids and crazy animals to pranks and painful-looking accidents. (R)

8.30 Coronation Street Hayley breaks down and lashes out at Roy, David is concerned when a despondent Kylie returns to No 8, and Nick makes a decision that has repercussions for Leanne.

9.00 Vicious A festive edition of the comedy starring Ian McKellen and Derek Jacobi. Freddie and Stuart invite friends round for a Christmas Day celebration at their flat.

9.35 Bridget Jones's Diary (2001) A woman begins a new year by resolving to find love and give up her bad habits. Romantic comedy based on Helen Fielding's novel, with Renee Zellweger, Hugh Grant and Colin Firth. ★★

11.20 ITV News at Ten and Weather; Weather.

11.35 The Cube A childminder and a Londoner take up the challenge, aiming to complete tasks within the confines of the cube to win a jackpot of £250,000. Hosted by Phillip Schofield. (R)

12.25 Jackpot247 Interactive gaming. 3.00 FILM: The Majestic (2001) Drama, starring Jim Carrey. ★★ 5.30 ITV Nightscreen

3.15 Deal or No Deal: Ideal Christmas Noel Edmonds hosts a festive-themed edition.

4.15 Come Dine with Me Christmas Special With Jona Lewie, Maizie Williams, VV Brown and Toby Anstis. (R)

5.20 The Simpsons Homer reminisces about the time he was in a band. (R)

5.50 Hollyoaks Freddie tries to save a loved one from the village's most dangerous residents.

6.20 Hollyoaks Freddie races to save a loved one from a grisly fate.

6.50 Channel 4 News 7.00 4thought.tv How Christmas is perceived by those who do not celebrate it.

7.05 Gordon Ramsay's Home Cooking With the help of his children, the chef prepares some of his favourite hot and spicy festive recipes, including Mexican eggs, noodle soup and aromatic whole crispy roast duck.

8.00 Celebrity Come Dine with Me Actress Danniella Westbrook, choreographer Louie Spence, 1980s pop star Sinitta and Hugo Taylor from Made in Chelsea get into the party spirit in a festive celebrity special.

9.00 The Inbetweeners Movie (2011) Awkward teenagers Simon, Will, Jay and Neil head to Greece for a wild holiday – but things do not go to plan. Comedy, with Joe Thomas, Simon Bird, James Buckley and Blake Harrison. ★★

10.55 Queer as Pop: From the Gay Scene to the Mainstream Documentary revealing how the social and political liberation of gay men has inspired and influenced the music mainstream over the past 40 years.

11.55 Chic: iTunes Festival Special Lauren Laverne introduces footage from the group's performance at the music event at London's Roundhouse.

12.55 Kylie Minogue: Showgirl – Live At Earl's Court. 1.55 FILM: The Rocky Horror Picture Show (1975) ★★ 3.35 90210 4.15 A Place in the Sun: Winter Sun (R) 5.10 SuperScrippers 5.20 Deal or No Deal (R)

4.10 Chitty Chitty Bang Bang (1968) Children's musical adventure, starring Dick Van Dyke. ★★

7.00 Eddie Stobart's Christmas Delivery Festive edition of the documentary, in which the company's truckers battle winter conditions to ensure shops and councils receive their supply of Christmas trees and salt. (R) 5 News Update

8.00 World's Strongest Man 2013 James Richardson presents the second heat from Hailang Bay in Sanya, China, featuring six competitors looking to finish in the top two and make it through to the final. 5 News at 9

9.00 Merry Christmas Mr Bean The hapless hero plans the Christmas holiday of a lifetime – but fate intervenes and pulls the rug out from under his feet, reducing what should have been the perfect festive season to a frantic comedy of errors. Slapstick, starring Rowan Atkinson. Part of Slapstick Comedy Night. (R)

9.30 Do It Yourself Mr Bean The hapless hero's party falls flat, but he finds an ingenious way to beat the sales queues and bag a bargain. Slapstick comedy, starring Rowan Atkinson. Part of Slapstick Comedy Night. (R)

10.00 Tommy Cooper's Christmas A seasonal special from 1973, featuring comedy sketches, magic and guest appearances by Sacha Distel and Clodagh Rodgers, who perform a medley of festive favourites. Part of Slapstick Comedy Night. (R)

11.05 The Plank (1967) Two clumsy workmen carry a plank to a building site, causing various mishaps and accidents along the way. Slapstick comedy, directed by and starring Eric Sykes. With Tommy Cooper. Part of Slapstick Comedy Night. ★★

12.15 SuperCasino 3.05 Blackpool Lights 3.50 Motorsport Mundial 4.20 House Doctor (R) 4.45 Great Artists (R) 5.10 Nick's Quest (R) 5.35 Wildlife SOS (R)

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Property

YOUR WEEKLY GUIDE TO
HOME BUYING AND LETTING

Home is ideal opportunity for first-timers at £72,500



A WELL-PRESENTED one-bedroom ground floor flat in Foster Avenue, Hednesford with a rear garden and off road parking is an ideal first-time buy or buy to let investment.

Having gas central heating, it is for sale through Cross & Co priced £72,500. It has an entrance hall, lounge/dining room, kitchen, bedroom, a shower room and a rear garden.

An asphalt driveway leads to off-road parking at the side while the entrance hall has three storage cupboards, the lounge/dining room has a gas fire with a feature marble

hearth and a door leading to the garden. The kitchen has wall, drawer and base units with work surfaces, space for an oven, washing machine and dryer and tiled flooring. There is ample space in the bedroom for furniture while the shower room has a wash hand basin, shower cubicle and tiled splashbacks.

The rear garden is low maintenance comprising a patio area, brick store and space for a shed. For further information contact Cross & Co on 01543 500370 or visit the website at www.crossandcoproperties.co.uk

Extended family detached for sale

AN EXTENDED detached family home set within the sought after village of Bishopwood, that lies between Stafford and Wolverhampton is on the market with agent D B Roberts for offers around £320,000.

The well presented accommodation at the house on White Oaks Drive comprises a reception hallway, cloakroom, four reception rooms, modern fitted breakfast kitchen, feature conservatory and a further summer room.

To the first floor is a master bedroom with en suite, three further bedrooms and family bathroom which has both a bath and separate double shower cubicle.

The property is approached via a driveway providing ample off road parking, which leads up to two garages with separate doors. The property stands within a generous plot that benefits from not being overlooked and the gardens, with southerly aspect, are mature with an array of shrubs and borders.

The agent advises that viewing is essential in order to fully appreciate this family home. Call 01785 255800 for further details of visit the website at www.dbroberts.co.uk



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The above fuel consumption figures are based on an EU test for comparative purposes only and may not reflect real driving results.

*VAT free offer on Alto range: Alto 1.0 SZ available from £5,999, including customer saving of £1,200 to Alto 1.0 SZ4 A/T available at £8,625 including customer saving of £1,724 equivalent to VAT amount of previous on the road price of £7,199 (SZ) and £10,349 (SZ4 A/T). For full details contact your local participating Suzuki Dealer. Offer subject to availability for vehicles privately registered between 1st November 2013 and 31st December 2013 from participating Authorised Suzuki Dealers only. Offer cannot be used in conjunction with any other offers. All prices and specifications correct at time of going to print. 1 Manual transmission only. Model shown: Alto SZ4 (metallic paint available at £399).



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Property

Vegetable plot in garden of cottage

SITUATED in Lower Way, Upper Longdon, this cottage is on the market for £299,995.

It has porch entrance, kitchen, lounge/diner, conservatory, WC and ground floor bedroom.

On the first floor there are two further bedrooms and a bathroom.

Outside, to the front of the property is a block paved patio, parking for one vehicle, wall boundary and mature shrubbery.

Further to this are lawned areas, paved pathways, gated access stepping down to covered front entrance door with security light.

The rear garden is lawned with hedged borders, vegetable plot, brick-built storage and outside coal bunker.

For more information contact C Residential on 01889 583377.



Spacious plot for detached well-presented bungalow



JR PROPERTIES is pleased to offer for sale this well-presented and spacious semi-detached bungalow.

The property sits on a large low maintenance corner plot in Priory Road, Brereton, Rugeley, within a popular neighbourhood.

Inside there are two good-size bedrooms, modern bathroom, large lounge and kitchen with conservatory and no chain.

Outside, the property sits on an enviable corner plot with low maintenance block paving to three sides.

There is a gated side entrance providing off-road parking for numerous vehicles.

The property, on sale for £145,000, is offered with no chain.

Contact estate agent J R Properties on 01889 580280 for further information or to arrange a viewing.

Three-storey house on sale at £205,950

A WELL-PRESENTED modern three-bedroom, three-storey detached house, situated in Nuthatch Close, Heath Hayes, is on the market for £204,950 with the agent Chase Independent.

The accommodation comprises entrance hall, guest WC, dining room, breakfast kitchen, first floor lounge, study, master bedroom with en suite.

On the second floor are two further bedrooms and family bathroom.

The property benefits from gas central heating, double glazing, gardens, driveway and garage.

For more details, or to arrange a private viewing, contact the estate agent on 01543 504234.



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9 Local Information

public & legal notices

LICENSING ACT 2003

Application has been made by Peter Singh, to the Regulatory Services, Licensing Unit at Walsall Council, for a new Premises Licence in respect of premises to be known as: Drinks Oasis, 196 High Street, Bloxwich, Walsall, West Midlands WS3 3LA

The application includes the following terms:
1. To enable the sale of alcohol between Monday-Sunday 08:00-23:30 for consumption off the premises

Full details of the application may be viewed at the Council Offices, Regulatory Services, Licensing Unit, Walsall Council, Civic Centre, Darwall Street, Walsall WS1 1TP during normal office hours Monday to Friday (www.walsall.gov.uk)

Council's website www.dudley.gov.uk

Responsible authorities or other persons, can make written representations regarding the application, to the above Licensing Authority, and they must be received no later than 9th January 2014.

It is an offence knowingly or recklessly to make a false statement in connection with this application and on the summary conviction for the offence is £5,000.

FRANK JONES (Deceased)

Pursuant to the Trustee Act 1925 any persons having a claim against or an interest in the Estate of the aforementioned deceased, late of 129 Somerfield Road Bloxwich Walsall West Midlands WS3 2EN, who died on 30/07/2013, are required to send particulars thereof in writing to the undersigned on or before 28/02/2014, after which date the Estate will be distributed having regard only to claims and interests of which they have had notice.

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(Ref: NMC/322672/P/Jones) 7397539

Department for Transport

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990

THE SECRETARY OF STATE hereby gives notice of an Order made under Section 247 of the above Act entitled "The Stopping up of Highways (West Midlands) (No.46) Order 2013" authorising the stopping up of a length of the unnamed footpath connecting Millichip Road to New Street, the whole of the section of New Street connecting Willenhall Road to Vernon Close, the whole of an unnamed footpath connecting New Street to South Street, and the whole of South Street at Willenhall, in the City of Wolverhampton to enable development as permitted by Wolverhampton City Council under reference 12/01241/FUL.

COPIES OF THE ORDER may be OBTAINED, free of charge, from the Secretary of State, National Transport Casework Team, Tyneside House, Skinnerburn Road, Newcastle Business Park, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE4 7AR or nationalcasework@dtf.gsi.gov.uk (quoting NATTRAN/WM/S247/952) and may be inspected during normal opening hours at Wolverhampton City Council, Civic Centre, St Peter's Square, Wolverhampton, WV1 1RP.

ANY PERSON aggrieved by or desiring to question the validity of or any provision within the Order, on the grounds that it is not within the powers of the above Act or that any requirement or regulation made has not been complied with, may, within 6 weeks of 20 December 2013 apply to the High Court for the suspension or quashing of the Order or of any provision included.

Denise Hoggins
Department for Transport

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public & legal notices

LICENSING ACT 2003

Application has been made by Peter Singh, to the Regulatory Services, Licensing Unit at Walsall Council, for a new Premises Licence in respect of premises to be known as: Drinks Oasis, 196 High Street, Bloxwich, Walsall, West Midlands WS3 3LA

The application includes the following terms:
1. To enable the sale of alcohol between Monday-Sunday 08:00-23:30 for consumption off the premises

Full details of the application may be viewed at the Council Offices, Regulatory Services, Licensing Unit, Walsall Council, Civic Centre, Darwall Street, Walsall WS1 1TP during normal office hours Monday to Friday (www.walsall.gov.uk)

Council's website www.dudley.gov.uk

Responsible authorities or other persons, can make written representations regarding the application, to the above Licensing Authority, and they must be received no later than 9th January 2014.

It is an offence knowingly or recklessly to make a false statement in connection with this application and on the summary conviction for the offence is £5,000.

FRANK JONES (Deceased)

Pursuant to the Trustee Act 1925 any persons having a claim against or an interest in the Estate of the aforementioned deceased, late of 129 Somerfield Road Bloxwich Walsall West Midlands WS3 2EN, who died on 30/07/2013, are required to send particulars thereof in writing to the undersigned on or before 28/02/2014, after which date the Estate will be distributed having regard only to claims and interests of which they have had notice.

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Department for Transport

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990

THE SECRETARY OF STATE hereby gives notice of an Order made under Section 247 of the above Act entitled "The Stopping up of Highways (West Midlands) (No.46) Order 2013" authorising the stopping up of a length of the unnamed footpath connecting Millichip Road to New Street, the whole of the section of New Street connecting Willenhall Road to Vernon Close, the whole of an unnamed footpath connecting New Street to South Street, and the whole of South Street at Willenhall, in the City of Wolverhampton to enable development as permitted by Wolverhampton City Council under reference 12/01241/FUL.

COPIES OF THE ORDER may be OBTAINED, free of charge, from the Secretary of State, National Transport Casework Team, Tyneside House, Skinnerburn Road, Newcastle Business Park, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE4 7AR or nationalcasework@dtf.gsi.gov.uk (quoting NATTRAN/WM/S247/952) and may be inspected during normal opening hours at Wolverhampton City Council, Civic Centre, St Peter's Square, Wolverhampton, WV1 1RP.

ANY PERSON aggrieved by or desiring to question the validity of or any provision within the Order, on the grounds that it is not within the powers of the above Act or that any requirement or regulation made has not been complied with, may, within 6 weeks of 20 December 2013 apply to the High Court for the suspension or quashing of the Order or of any provision included.

Denise Hoggins
Department for Transport

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general

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Pics beat conditions and grab the victory

Rushall Olympic 3 Kings Lynn Town1
WITH the conditions against them in the first half Rushall made light of it and almost went in front after just nine minutes but visiting keeper Alex Street made a fine diving save to keep out Dele Adebole's header.

The visitors replied and Massiah McDonald saw his shot blocked and when the rebound fell to Fryatt his shot was straight at Chris Gemmell.

The home side though went ahead in the 17th minute when Stan Mugisha raced onto Josh Craddock's through-ball to place his shot in the empty net.

On the stroke of half time the visitors missed a great chance.

Fryatt, unmarked in the six yard box, failed to connect from a corner and the Linnetts were made to pay dearly, when, Dele Adebole used his strength and power to great affect and score.

Rushall made a flying start to the second half and within five minutes Christian Dacres made it three finishing off a goalmouth scramble.

Two minutes later though the visitors pulled a goal back when McDonald curled a fine shot into the top corner of the net.

Seconds go for a Burton in contest

Walsall 2nds 21 Burton 34

THIS should have been a much closer rugby game, but a catalogue of errors during a 15 minute period in the second half gifted the visitors two tries.

Walsall try scorers were Liam Lloyd, Karl Robinson and Matt James. Mitch Carless kicked three conversions.

Walsall 3rd XV 17 Burton 20

Walsall did, however, outscore their opponents by three tries to two. Two tries and a conversion from Kieran Smith with Andy Pain scoring the third try.

Walsall Colts10 Wolverhampton 25.

Backrow forwards Matt James and Connor Fletcher scored their tries.

Handsworth U-13s 22 Walsall U-13s 17

This was a good game between two evenly matched teams both in attack and defence.

Walsall were under strong pressure at times. But in Jack Travis and Dimitri Morrison, Walsall had two players who constantly defended well.

Owls looking for extension

SHEFFIELD Wednesday are trying to extend the loan of Wolves defender Roger Johnson.

Johnson has played 13 games for the Owls since joining them in September, continuing to be a mainstay in the team despite manager Dave Jones losing his job.

Caretaker-boss Stuart Gray is a big admirer of the 30-year-old, who has won three, drawn four and lost six of the games he has been involved in to date.

Gray said he understood Johnson's loan ends on January 2 and the former Wolves coach wants to keep the one-time £4m signing for the rest of the season if he can.

Villa suffer annual defeat from United

Villa 0 Man Utd 3
VILLA'S biggest home crowd of the season - 42,682 - watched on as powerless as their team as Manchester United's dominance at Villa Park continued.

The champions haven't lost in B6 since 1995 and that record never looked in doubt once Danny Welbeck struck twice in three first-half minutes.

It was the annual home defeat to United but one that left them with just seven points from their eight Villa Park games this season.

It is a worrying trend that mirrors last season's wretched

home form where they won just five league games. Villa had started well but folded once Welbeck struck. The absence of experience was their undoing and while Christian Benteke's goal drought - now at 10 games - continues others struggle to fill the void.

And with Gabby Agbonlahor now suspended for Saturday's Stoke trip there is another forward problem.

Man Utd arrived after back-to-back Premier League defeats and a whopping 13 points adrift of leaders Arsenal.

Football

They left with some confidence restored. United boss David Moyes, under pressure himself, saluted Villa and insisted no-one would be doing a better job than Lambert after their drastic overhaul of the last couple of years.

But that support will matter little to the Villa faithful after watching their side roll over. Matt Lowton, Antonio Luna, Yacouba Sylla and Marc Albrighton returned after the 2-0 defeat at Fulham, with Albrighton making

his first Premier League start since January 1.

The winger was the one bright spot on a dull afternoon and there is now real hope he can recapture the form of three years ago, when he scored against United in a 2-2 draw.

And he twice went close, testing David De Gea with Karim El Ahmadi as the hosts enjoyed a false dawn. They failed to make the breakthrough though and United struck twice in three minutes to end Villa's afternoon before it had begun. First Welbeck stole in to hammer in on 16 minutes before

he doubled his tally, converting Antonio Valencia's low cross.

Villa had been carved apart by two simplistic goals as United underlined the gulf in quality.

The game was over on 52 minutes when Tom Cleverley fired past Brad Guzan.

Luna failed to track the mid-fielder having initially gifted United the ball to underline the problems Villa have at the back.

Against Fulham right-back Leandro Bacuna was the fall guy, this time it was left-back Luna, torn apart by the marauding Valencia.

Walsall battle through and overcome Burton

Burton 29 Walsall 36
WALSALL showed real battling qualities before securing their ninth consecutive victory at an unusually muddy Peal Croft.

They withstood early pressure and then scored a try with one of their early possessions. Hard-working Steve Halbert initiated the attack and then Rod Dickson made another surge before some delightful passing gave space for full back Chris Mould to touchdown.

But for the next 20 minutes Walsall were under relentless pressure.

The Burton team were fully committed to a run and support style of play and began to take advantage of some unusually weak Walsall tackling.

During this time the hosts scored three tries.

Centre Betty made a strong run before Tom Harris got the final touchdown.

Two minutes later Darryl Banton finished off a good counterattack.

Sam Benjamin then made a defence bursting 50 metre run for a superb solo effort score. Archer converted two and kicked a penalty.

This gave Burton a 22-7 lead with still ten minutes left of the half.

Walsall, to their credit, came back strongly and established what proved to be a match-winning lead.

Forward pressure resulted in Weston kicking a penalty.

Halbert, Mould and Crowhurst then helped to create the position for Walsall's next score.

A good drive from a lineout resulted in Halbert getting the final touchdown.

The visitor's next try came from a lineout.

Hughes won the ball on the Burton throw, Hickman and Benson made good ball carries before the Walsall backs put together another fine passing movement

Football

which resulted in a second try for Mould.

Weston putting over the conversions despite the muddy conditions.

The visitors had more control during the second half, and extended their lead when centre Harvey Wootton made a 45 metre try-scoring break.

But Burton closed to within two points as No.8 Dutton broke through a weak Walsall defence from a scrum.

Walsall however, secured the win when scrum half Pit-taway found Jack Crowhurst with a neat pass.

The young winger diving over for the crucial score.

The hosts still had time to push for an equalising score, but on this occasion the Walsall defence, with Hughes and Halbert in particular, were solid with their tackles and held on for the win.

No Midlands One West league matches for two weeks.

So the year ends with three Staffordshire teams occupying the top three league positions.

Lichfield have a comfortable lead, while Walsall are now challenging Burton for the play off place.

Walsall travel to Stafford this Saturday to play their Staffordshire Cup match. The game kicks off at 2pm.



Walsall's captain Steve Halbert heads off on another strong run during the match against Burton



Walsall centre Harvey Wootton sets off on a try scoring run which helped his team to victory over Burton

Old rivals fight it out in a dreary match

Wednesbury RUFC 15 Bloxwich RUFC 13

WEDNESBURY entertained their old rivals Bloxwich, in what turned out to be not a very entertaining game.

Wednesbury weak in the pack but stronger around the field Bloxwich with a very strong pack and not much more so for large parts of the match they cancelled each other out.

For most of the first half Bloxwich dominated in the pack but then squandered their advantage with repeated infringements.

For most of the half both sides were pinned down in the midfield in what was a very poor game.

Then with only a few minutes of

the half remaining Wednesbury's centre Mitch Grearly intercepted a Bloxwich pass, raced nearly half the length of the pitch he was tackled just before the try line but his momentum carried him over for the try, Tom Huggins converted.

Then right on half time Bloxwich were awarded a scrum on the Wednesbury five metre line and with their superior pack pushed the home side over the try line then added the conversion to make the scores equal.

The second half carried on in the same vein Bloxwich dominating the scrum but squandering their possession giving away penalties.

Wednesbury regained the lead 12 minutes into the second half, the visitors gave away another penalty Tom Huggins stepped up and converted.

The game then carried on with a midfield slog neither side seeming able to take the advantage. With just ten minutes remaining Bloxwich were awarded a penalty which they converted to level the score.

Within three minutes they took the lead with yet another penalty. This seemed to be the wake up call Wednesbury needed, they threw everything at the visitors.

Deep into injury time Wednesbury's fullback Craig Tilley received a pass on the halfway line

and went on a run evading tackle after tackle then on the visitors five metre line he was tackled and brought to the ground but managed to get his pass away to Sam Ebanks who was following up behind him to finish off the move with a magnificent try, no conversion.

Final score Wednesbury 15 Bloxwich 13 and a much-needed win for Wednesbury in their final game before the Christmas break.

Wednesbury's next game on January 4 is away to Eccleshall with the kickoff 2.15pm.

Coach Tom Huggins awarded his man of the match to Matt Dale in his first game of the season back after a shoulder injury.

Let's stake a place in play-offs - Mantom

SAM MANTOM is urging Walsall to use the festive period as the launchpad for an assault on the League One play-offs.

Starting with Saturday's home game against Carlisle, Dean Smith's side face the prospect of five games in a fortnight, with none of their opponents currently in the top half of the table.

Midfielder Mantom pinpoints the 4-2 win at MK Dons on Boxing Day 2012 as key to kickstarting the Saddlers excellent second half to last season and is hoping they can repeat the trick this term.

Smith's men are well placed in ninth, four points off the top six.

"The Christmas period is always a big period for any club," said Mantom. "The games come so quick and you always get some injuries and suspensions so it's a testing time for the club.

"We'll be playing teams who are likely to be below us so we're looking to pick up points against them."

The clash with Carlisle is followed by trips to Bristol City and Gillingham before a home game with Sheffield United on New Year's Day.

Smith's men are also pencilled in to face Oldham on January 4.

Chances are missed in Villa victory

Wolves Under-21s 0 Villa Under-21s 2

IT was a tale of chances taken by Villa and wasted by Wolves in the West Midlands Under-21s derby at AFC Telford.

Villa got the goal they deserved when centre-back Janoi Donacien glanced home Robinson's left-wing cross in the 14th minute, Hennessey getting a hand to the ball.

Jake Cassidy drove narrowly wide on the angle three minutes before the break after a powerful burst forward by Eusebio Bancesi.

Two minutes after the restart, Cassidy failed to get a shot in after latching on to Jordan Cranston's cross on the run.

And Villa made them pay on 48 as Andras Stieber ran from halfway after beating the offside trap before curling a low shot inside Hennessey's near post.

Wolves launched a late rally and Watkins denied Ismail's left-foot shot before Elokobi blazed over from close range from a corner then beat away Kostina's acutely-angled effort before Davis drove just too high.

Saido faces fine for tweet

YOUNG striker Saido Berahino faces a hefty fine from Albion after publishing an offensive tweet in the wake of Steve Clarke's sacking.

The 20-year-old forward sent out the tweet including two swear words before later claiming it was unrelated to Clarke and bizarrely blaming his anger on a puncture.

The Baggies appear to have accepted Berahino's explanation but he is still expected to be disciplined by the club. The original tweet, which appeared just over an hour after Clarke's departure was confirmed, read: "Wow i cant believe it, thats ***** s g*****!"



Man of the match - Matt Dale

SPORT

Sports Desk 01902 319531

Old rivals
Close battle in
a dreary contest
Page 39



Burton bash
Battling squad
grab the victory
Page 39

e-mail: chronsport@expressandstar.co.uk

Lockmen feel the four-ge of Robins

Willenhall 0 Dudley Town 4
THREADBARE Willenhall were again reduced to a bare 11 fit players as they slipped to defeat against 10-man Dudley.

Kieron Hesson and Scott Harris both went close as Willenhall started well before a free-kick from the left on 13 minutes saw both Simon Laidley and Mattie Dorgan have efforts blocked.

But, with their first real chance on 17 minutes, Dudley took the lead. Rion Mills Francis was found in space on the left and he calmly lifted his shot over the advancing Steve Booth.

He then doubled Dudley's advantage 11 minutes later when he curled a shot into the corner via Booth's touch and the far post.

The Lockmen should have had a penalty on 34 minutes when Jamel Fuller was pulled back in the box.

The Robins were reduced to 10 men just before the break when keeper Tom Harper dismissed for deliberate hand-ball outside the box.

A quick break by Mills down the left set up his strike partner Dominik Watson to score.

Dudley rounded off the scoring when Booth made a one-handed save only to see Tom Overfield fire home the loose ball. The Reds round off this year's campaign at home against Wolverhampton Casuals on Saturday.

Warning to the slackers

HARDLINE Kenny Jackett has warned Wolves slackers Bakary Sako and Leigh Griffiths he will not tolerate another display like Saturday's as he declared the battle is on for their places.

The Molineux head coach also insisted he hasn't thought about cashing in on Sako in January and backed the winger to return to form.

Jackett accused his top scorers of a lack of workrate after hauling both off at half-time of the 2-0 defeat by MK Dons.

"Sako and Griffiths have got to respond in the right way," said Jackett.

"They can't put in a first 45 minutes like they did because it wasn't enough."

"They have to work harder because I was disappointed in what they did and they know their standards have to be kept up."

Asked if Sako's place is under threat, Jackett said: "I'll see how he responds."

Loss of identity led to loss of Baggies boss



Steve Clarke - sacked

STEVE CLARKE can call on some high-powered testimonials as to the quality of his work.

Five-star managers, former and current internationals - all have been unanimous about Clarke's abilities, certainly as a coach.

But the axe has fallen in support of one of the game's oldest adages. All teams eventually assume the personality of the man at the helm and under their quiet and undemonstrative head coach, Albion had become anonymous.

Like the names Clarke can put on

Football

his CV, the Baggies have an impressive roster, by easy consent their most impressive of the Premier League era.

But they have become neither one thing nor the other in a year of deepening decline; all the glitter is on paper when it needs to be on the pitch.

After one-and-a-half seasons, it is difficult to know what Clarke's Albion stand for, what their identity is. He certainly never seemed to

settle on a best team. They have an array of attacking weaponry, but struggle to score goals. The stylish, possession-based passing football now comes only in fits and starts.

A defence that was the basis of his predecessor's success, has lost its certainty. Albion don't surrender meekly, but neither do they take games by the scruff of the neck.

In the eyes of supporters, Clarke was a reactive manager and not proactive, a man who seemed to approach games making sure he didn't lose it before he tried to win it.

There have been times in the club's Premier League story when that would have been acceptable - but not when he has such an impressive array of offensive talent at his disposal.

All of this has combined to cost him his place and when the brutality of the moment has passed the 50-year-old Scot with the blue chip contacts book may view his first spell in charge as a missed opportunity.

He wanted to preach caution still when The Hawthorns was primed for greater adventure.

Lalkovic keeping the faith

MATCH-WINNER Milan Lalkovic insisted Walsall's play-off ambitions are genuine after the Saddlers' return to winning ways.

Dean Smith's men ended a four-game run without a win with a second victory over Shrewsbury.

It was a win which ended fears that a recent dip in results could sabotage their League One campaign.

Lalkovic was delighted at the second-half strike that clinched victory and urged fans to keep the faith as they face a busy holiday programme starting with the weekend visit of Carlisle.

"This is a team which can definitely reach the play-offs, there is no doubt in my mind about that," he said.

"There are games we should have won but sometimes that happens - we were getting chances but the ball just wouldn't go in. You don't need a big scoreline to get three points. You don't have to win 5-0 all the time."

"One-nil will do and with the players that we have here, we will score goals."

"We should have beaten Crawley, we should have beaten Port Vale I think - but sometimes games are like that. The important thing is we keep playing and making chances."

MK Dons damage Wolves' chances

Wolves 0 MK Dons 2

BACK-TO-BACK defeats without scoring has at least loosened the nuts on Wolves' promotion bandwagon a little, if not seen the wheels come off.

Patrick Bamford's goal on the half hour shattered the flimsy platform Wolves' half-hearted shots had created and Ben Reeves finished the job.

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SADDLERS VICTORY TAMES THE SHREWS

Shrewsbury 0 Walsall 1

WALSALL have kept calm, carried on and to just a hint of relief now got the result their football merited and needed.

A nagging four-game sequence without a win had raised the familiar critique of the Saddlers being all pass and no punch.

But the season is back on course and Dean Smith's team can point to the virtues of 'keeping the faith' and sticking to his team's admirable game plan.

Five weeks on from the FA Cup mauling of Shrewsbury, the League One neighbours met again at a different venue and with Graham Turner's team fortified by the loan market.

The outcome, however, was much the same; a couple of goals shy this time but in essence the unmistakable impression that Dean Smith's men have got the measure of the Shrews.

Tormenting

After tormenting this opposition for four-fifths of this contest, no-one at Greenhous Meadow on Saturday could dispute the Saddlers can lay claim to being one of the third tier's most attractive teams.

It is a label that comes with a cautionary note about an end-product - the Saddlers are still barely running at a goal a game - but with Milan Lalkovic's solitary strike early in the second-half proving enough to win this one Smith ruefully remarked: "At least this week I might not be asked about strikers for once..."

His frustration at the running grumble is understandable. Of course he would love to have the budget to find a goalscorer significantly better than he possesses - but he hasn't and there would be no guarantee that a different beast wouldn't upset the ecosystem of the most fluid and fluent Walsall team we have seen in years.

Supporting that view was the outstanding performance of Craig Westcarr and, just behind him, Romaine Sawyers.

It is probably a metaphor for the whole issue that Westcarr produced the most complete all-round display of front running it is possible to imagine ... minus, of course, a goal.

But Walsall mixed up their game very cleverly in testing conditions and Westcarr was the man who made it work.

The Saddlers were not afraid to turn Shrewsbury's defenders around.

Lalkovic's very sure-footed execution of a chance set up by Sawyers and a stray Shrewsbury defender who played him and Baxendale on-side. That sent Walsall through on goal.

Lalkovic deferred the pass to his colleague as Chris Weale was drawn, rounded and a shot deposited.



Craig Westcarr battling it out with Darren Jones during the away match against Shrewsbury Town

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